PS3 PlayStation 3 | PSP PlayStation Portable | PS VITA PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Issue 050 October 2011

Deus Ex

Battlefield 3

SoulCalibur V

Assassin's Creed

Journey

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 50 (October 2011)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

BATMAN
SECRETS OF ARKHAM CITY REVEALED

+

10 ALL-TIME GREATS
PSone Classics worth replaying

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M

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Strong Language

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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PlayStation®Move

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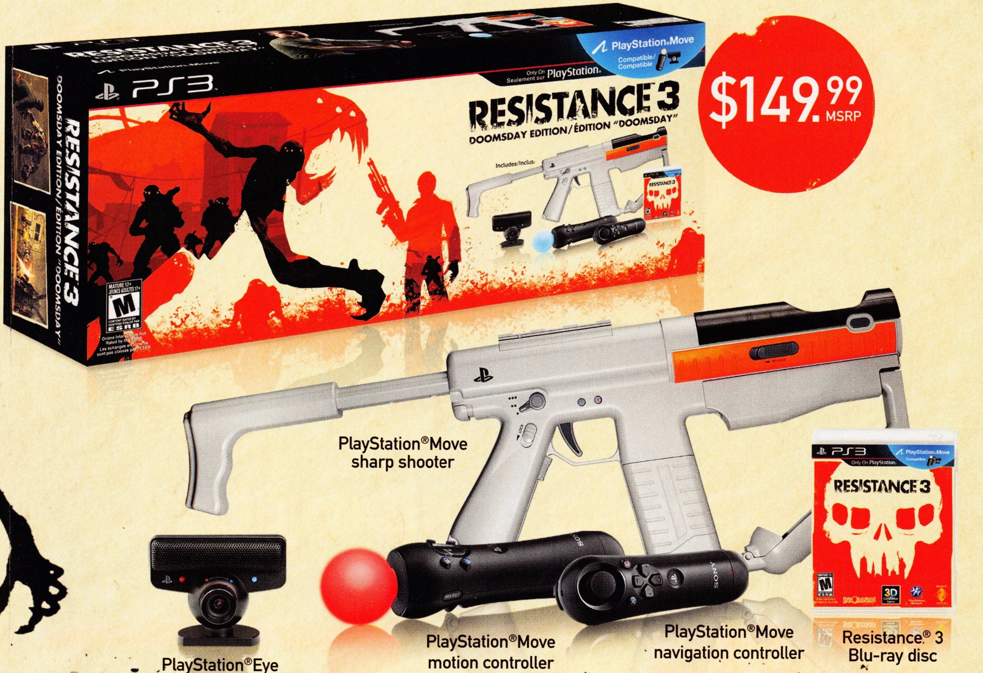
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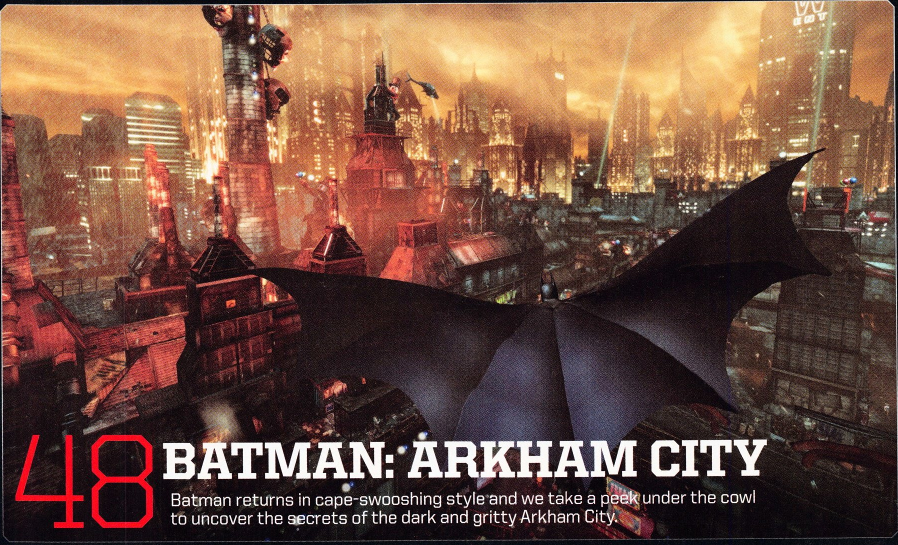
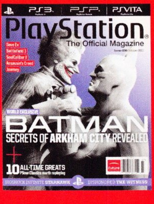


48 BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Batman returns in cape-swooshing style and we take a peek under the cowl to uncover the secrets of the dark and gritty Arkham City.

ON THE COVER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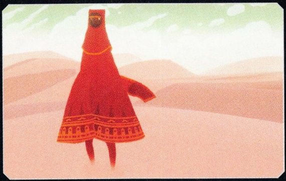

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Thatgamecompany's next great adventure leaves us without words—only gestures.

64 10 PSONE CLASSICS

We select our PSone favorites, all still available through PSN.

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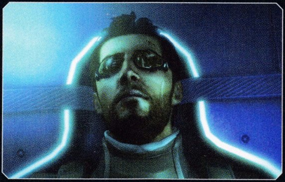

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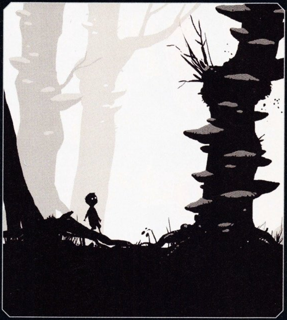
26 **ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS**
Ezio may be a bit on the old side, but we're fairly certain he could still take us in a fight. New locations, new gadgets, and new mysteries await us in *Revelations*.



80 **LIMBO**
If you thought doing the "Limbo Rock" was hard, wait until you got a hold of this game.

Best of Times

Saying goodbye isn't easy

For as long as I can remember, I've been obsessed with magazines. And not just gaming magazines. I can recall, even back in high school, how I'd spend hours at a newsstand or bookstore, discovering new magazines, buying them by the stack, reading page after page, and even lingering over the mastheads, puzzling out what each role might do—and where I might one day find myself.

I've also loved videogames, and the original PlayStation easily ranks as my personal favorite console of all time. (Until, perhaps, the Vita comes out…)

So you can imagine what a thrill it's been running PTOM for the past couple of years. It was, unequivocally, a dream of mine to lead a PlayStation magazine, and every day on the job I've counted my blessings, grateful to be here, ecstatic to produce a magazine that you and I both adore.

I share this with you because this is my final issue as editor in chief of PTOM. I'm moving on to my next adventure, still within parent-company Future US, to run GamesRadar.com. And while I'm excited for my next adventure, I can't help but feel a bit melancholic. Not many people get to do exactly what they've always dreamed of—so you can imagine how tough it is for me leave this job.

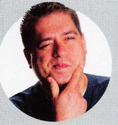
Rest assured, PTOM is in good hands, under the able and creative leadership of Roger Burchill and Ken Bousquet, with the rest of the team ready to deliver the magazine you love. And while I'll miss the grueling deadlines and late nights with this incredible crew, I can't wait to share the experience of reading this magazine for the first time alongside the rest of you. I'm sure it'll be as magical an experience as it's been leading PTOM.

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief

Few things make Gary Steinman more furious than sloppy work. On that short list are non-Europeans who spell humor with a "u," when his local grocery store is out of Otter Pops, and hairless cats…those little freaks.



Roger Burchill
Managing Editor

When the Baja Men posed the question, "Who Let the Dogs Out?" Roger Burchill was the only man with an answer. Thanks to him, the perpetrators are now behind bars and all canines have been returned to their homes.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director

As a young boy, a team of shady art dealers tried to hire Ken Bousquet to recreate Leonardo DaVinci's "Vitruvian Man." Though perfectly capable, he turned the job down saying he "just didn't roll that way."

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor

Scott Butterworth can rock and he can roll, but sadly, he cannot shimmy, which led to his dismissal from *Dancing with the Stars*. He now hosts his own show in which choreographers fight to the death.

Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor

Ryan Taljonick's life is an open book. It has a slow start, but really picks up once he moves to San Francisco. Unfortunately, it reaches a grisly dénouement when he goes head-to-head with a robot he built in his basement.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern

When intern Anne Lewis is not at the office, she can be found working on her career as a musician. Her true identity as the guitarist from Slipknot remained a secret right up until this sentence.

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LONG LIVE PLAY.

See what Kevin Butler has to say at
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Inside Qore Episode 41

Silent Knight

Batman games—*Batmans? Batmen?*—have almost universally sucked until Rocksteady punched out *Arkham Asylum*. We talk with the team creating its sequel *Batman: Arkham City* about its intense, brawling action. Bats might not like guns, but we're equally excited about *Battlefield 3*, the modern military game with a big arsenal. Then, get off the couch with five new Move games, letting you interact like never before: *Everybody Dance, Little Big Planet 2: Move Edition, EyePet and Friends, Carnival Island,* and *Medieval Moves: Deadmund's Quest*. And hide under the covers for the reboot of the classic thriller, *Silent Hill*.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

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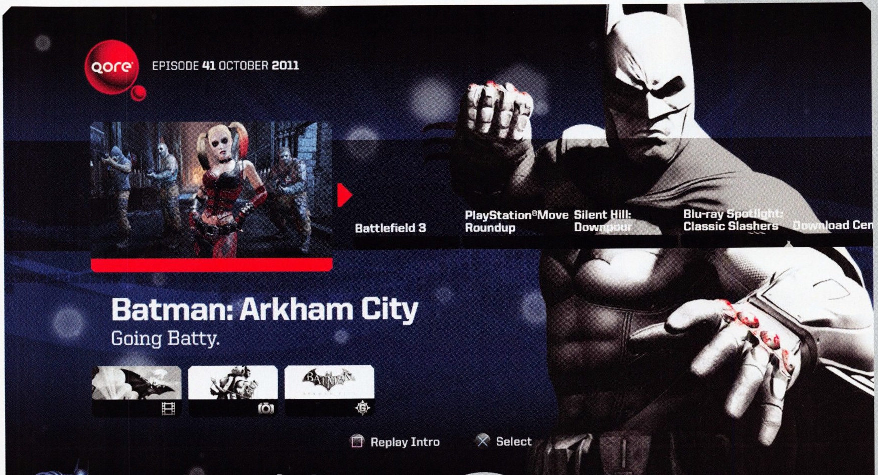
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EPISODE 41 OCTOBER 2011
Battlefield 3
PlayStation®Move Roundup
Silent Hill: Downpour
Blu-ray Spotlight: Classic Slashers
Download Cen
Batman: Arkham City
Going Batty.
Replay Intro
Select

Batman: Arkham City
Where does he get those wonderful toys?

Battlefield 3
Load up for some shock and awe.

PlayStation® Move Roundup
Shake it like a Polaroid picture.

Silent Hill: Downpour
Nobody can hear you scream.

Blu-ray Spotlight
You can't hide from these classic, horror thrillers.

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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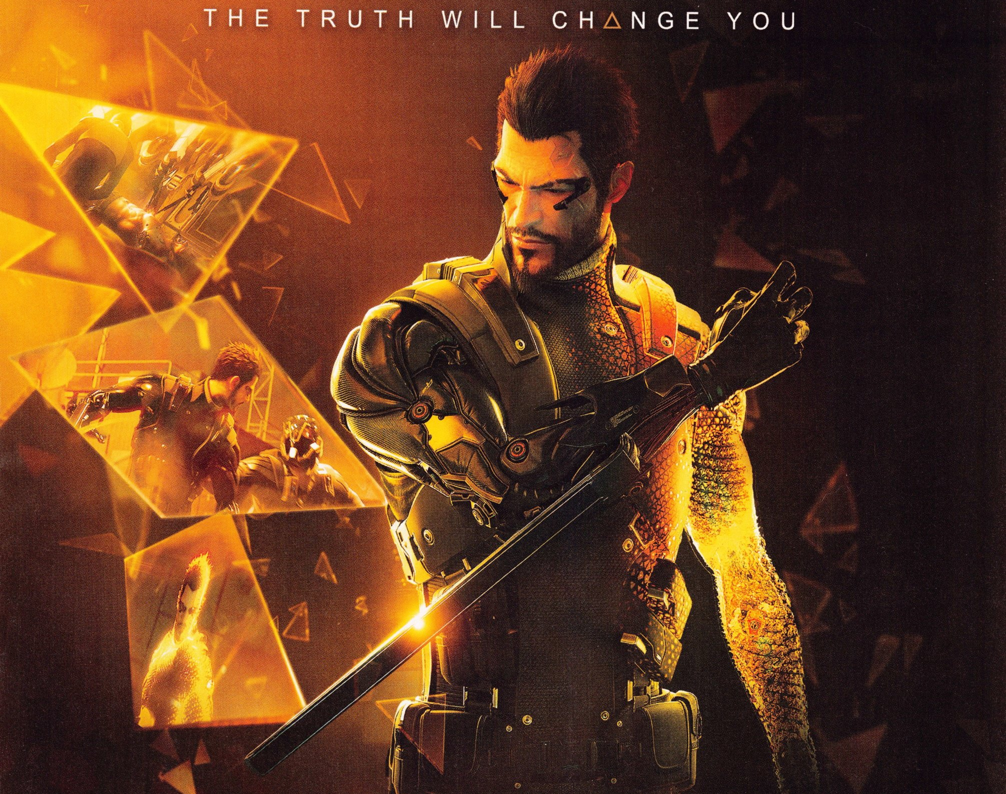
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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

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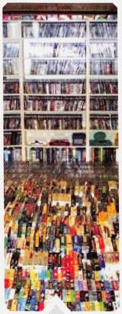
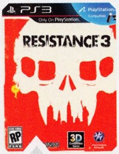


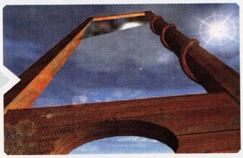


AUG 30

Off Target
On this date in 1146, Europe outlawed the crossbow intending to end war forever. Nice try.

SEP 02

Off With Their Heads!
Yes, we know National Beheading Day isn't recognized in any official way, but it sure is fun to wheel a guillotine into work.



06

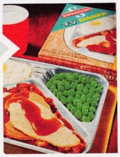
Humanity's Last Shot
Resistance 3 is out today, and let's just say humanity is totally boned.
In Stores
Dead Island, Disgaea 4, Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

09

PlayStation Launch
In 1995 PSone launched in America, and 16 years later we're still buying games for our PS3s.

10

PTOM Dinner Club
Swanson's sold their first TV dinner on this date in 1954. Thank god, otherwise we'd starve to death.



12

National Video Games Day
Today is our day. We're treating ourselves to a game and creating new butt indents on our couches.

13

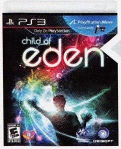
Sweet Deke, Bro
NHL 12 hits stores today, now featuring 100 percent more missing teeth.
In Stores
God of War: Origins Collection, White Knight Chronicles II

16

Scruffy Nerf Herder
Star Wars: The Complete Saga is out on Blu-ray today, but those who want their collection sans suckage should opt for *The Original Trilogy*.

16-18

Austin City Limits
The ACL music festival is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a lineup including Stevie Wonder, Kanye West, and Arcade Fire.



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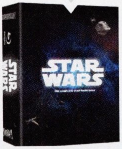
Pretty Colors
Child of Eden, the spiritual successor to *Rez*, arrives for PS3.
In Stores
F1 2011

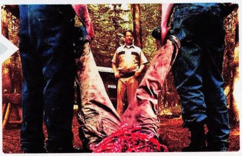


27

Hot Potts
Happy birthday, Gwyneth Paltrow, whose maturity we still find attractive.
In Stores
ICO/Shadow of the Colossus Collection, FIFA 12, Supremacy MMA, Atelier Totori: Adventurer, Splinter Cell Classic Trilogy HD

30

Make 'em Laugh
Tucker & Dale vs Evil arrives in theaters today, and while it promises to be stupid, we're suckers for a horrific comedy of errors.



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Mild Language
Use of Alcohol

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Star Struck
Sony's *Warhawk* followup adds some real-time strategy.
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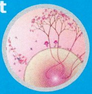
Indie Investment
Sony becomes the patron saint of indie game development.
▶▶Page 18



Dishonor Bound
Bethasda stocks up on talent for its next big game project.
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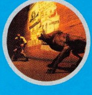


Marvelous
New fighters for Marvel and Capcom's ultimate showdown.
▶▶Page 23

The Great Debate
Pay to play? PTOM eds face off over online passes.
▶▶Page 24

1

Calling all Elite

Call of Duty Elite promises to elevate the COD experience and our game

When it comes to *Call of Duty* multiplayer matches, we're *really* good at playing *really* mediocre. Thankfully, Call of Duty Elite, Activision's new (and completely optional) digital subscription service, aims to help us improve our game. Though pricing has yet to be announced, it's important to dispel the rumors: *COD* multiplayer will remain free to play—even a large chunk of Elite's robust features are free. However, those who opt-in for the premium version of the service will have access to all future *COD* DLC in addition to many yet-unannounced exclusive features that will launch in conjunction with *Modern Warfare 3*. Here's how Elite will enhance the *COD* experience.

COD career

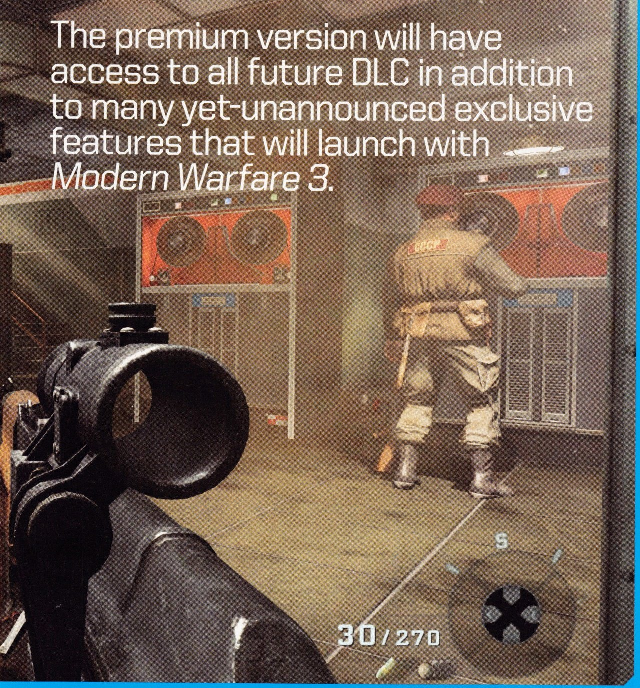
Numbers don't lie, and Elite's career tab is filled with all manner of detailed statistics spanning our entire *COD* history from *Black Ops* on. We can check our total hours played, winning percentage, kill/death ratio, a detailed report of our XP accumulation, and more. We can even search for other players' PSN IDs to compare stats and check out their weapon loadouts and perk combinations.

Skilled kills

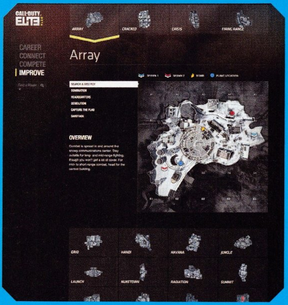
While skill definitely factors into finishing atop the scoreboard, Elite offers a variety of tools to help us analyze our weaknesses and improve our technique. We can view detailed post-match information, including comprehensive heat maps and timelines indicating every kill and death within a match, as well as in-depth statistics about our performance with every weapon, such as accuracy and number of kills. Additionally, we can view video tutorials discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each weapon (and tips for proper usage), as well as recommended perk combinations.

Group up

Elite's statistics are only a part of what the service has to offer. One of its greatest features is the ability to create clan pages and custom groups with other players based on personal interests or hobbies. Have a passion for collecting plastic Easter eggs? Simply create a group through Elite's interface and watch as other like-minded players join up. Each group has its own stat-based leaderboards, and members can post comments on the group's page, similar to Facebook wall posts.



The premium version will have access to all future DLC in addition to many yet-unannounced exclusive features that will launch with *Modern Warfare 3.*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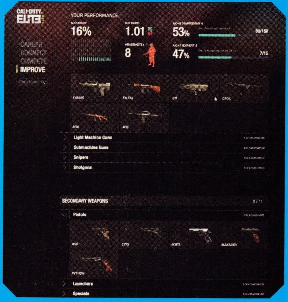
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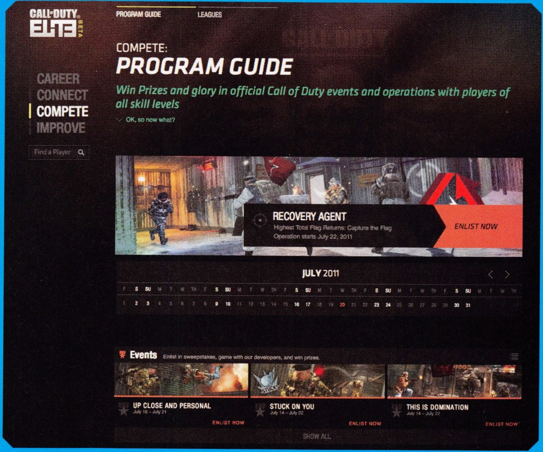
Analyze past performances and research weapon attributes to increase in-game effectiveness.

Share the wealth

Thousands of in-game videos have already been captured with *Black Ops'* Theater Mode; Elite offers the functionality to easily post our favorite clips on our group or clan's page. Elite even tags other players featured in our footage—there's no more hiding from those embarrassing backstabs or amazing Hail Mary grenade lobs. Multiple video channels, such as *COD* staff picks and top-rated videos, will also be available for our viewing pleasure.

Dominate the competition

With a player base as large as the *COD* community, it only makes sense that Elite will have a dedicated tournament calendar. Not all competitions are based on gaming skill, however: Some events will allow players to participate in screenshot and caption-creation contests in addition to the standard performance-based tournaments. There will be digital rewards, such as custom event badges to adorn our Elite profile page, as well as substantial real-world prizes, including the well-publicized *COD* edition Jeep (yes, the actual Jeep), await those talented enough to finish on top.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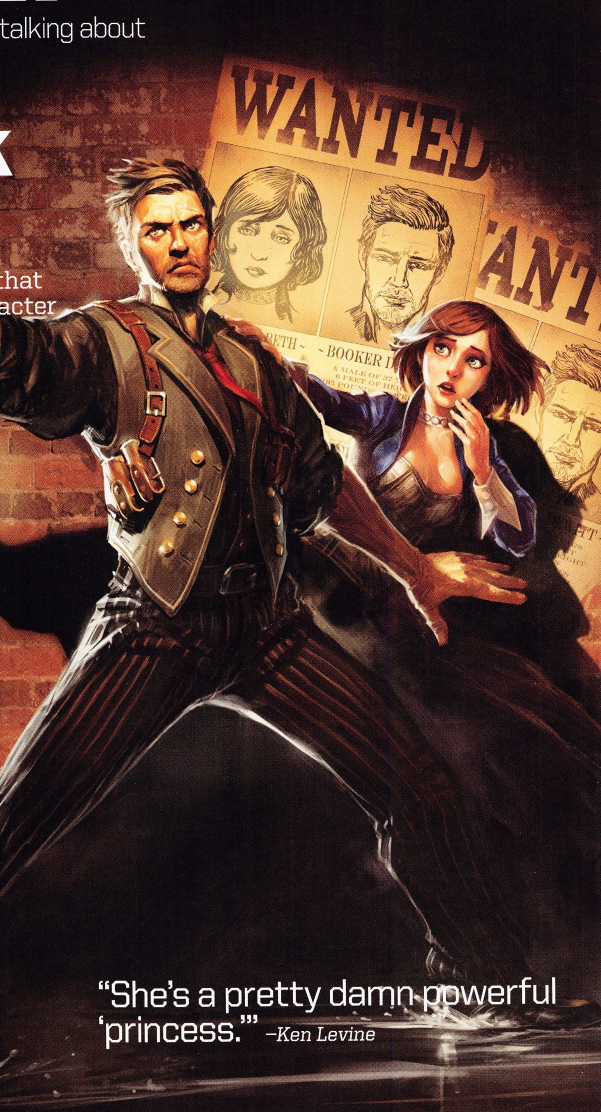
Compete in Elite tournaments to display skills and earn honor, prestige, and real-world prizes.

2 Shock culture

Ken Levine on the characters that give BioShock Infinite its character



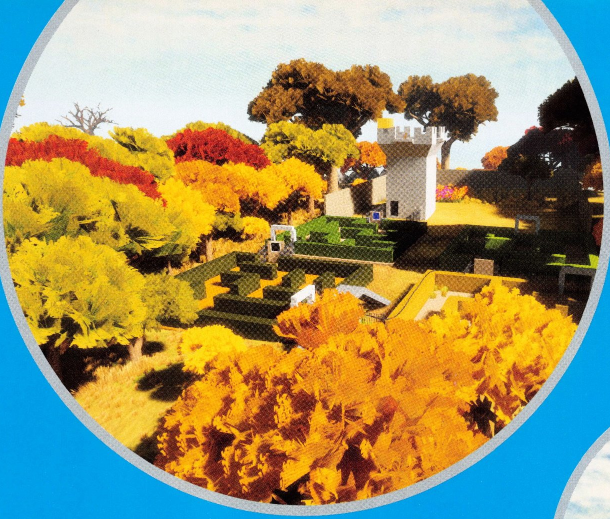
With the recent reveal of *BioShock Infinite's* lead, Booker DeWitt, Irrational Games has already shown more of the game's protagonist than it did in the original *BioShock*. "The game is centered around the relationship between Booker and Elizabeth," says creative director Ken Levine. "This is their story. Without knowing who Booker is, not much else makes sense."

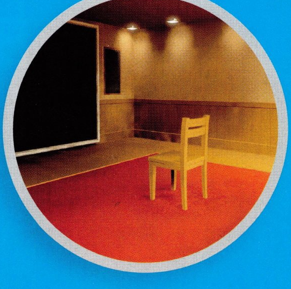
Indeed, in a recent gameplay demo, this relationship is brought immediately to the forefront. As DeWitt, we're moving side-by-side with Elizabeth through the *Infinite* universe, helping her escape the tower she's been confined in. But this isn't simply an updated version of the classic *Donkey Kong* parable. "She's a pretty damn powerful 'princess,'" declares Levine. "As demonstrated in the demo, Elizabeth has a goal and a purpose: to control her own destiny. She can handle herself. You never have to protect her in combat. This is not an escort mission, in the gaming sense of the word." Still, he says, the team is playing on certain classical archetypes, in much the same way the original *BioShock* traded on the Robinson Crusoe story. "The fun is seeing where it goes," says Levine.

Due to her years in captivity, Elizabeth is shown to have a rather childlike personality. Was this simply a creative choice made to suit videogames' somewhat limited A.I. constraints? "God, no," says Levine. "All that playfulness is way more complicated than just having her stand around politely like a proper adult. Giving a character personality outside of cutscenes is very hard to do. The woman has to be 'on' all the time, and she has to be 'in character'. For a good actor, that comes naturally. But we have to construct systems to make that work."

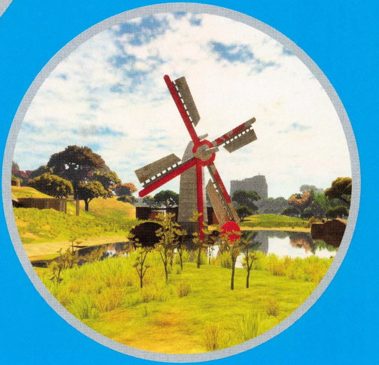
Interestingly, the notion of making DeWitt a former Pinkerton agent, however, came from a significantly more contemporary source. "Honestly? The TV show *Deadwood*," says Levine. "The Pinkertons seemed to be the only thing that put fear in [*Deadwood* villain] Swearengen's heart. That seemed like a good starting place. Once I started researching the Pinkertons, the question became, 'How could he be anything but?'"

> "She's a pretty damn powerful 'princess.'" –*Ken Levine*





A lone chair in front of a movie screen? No, that's not creepy at all.



One of the first sights on our journey was this windmill. Its purpose is yet unclear.

Each puzzle was designed to make us look at our surroundings in different ways.

3 Hey, are you watching this?

Jonathan Blow's The Witness demands our attention

After the huge critical success of 2008's time-bending puzzle game *Braid*, Jonathan Blow has a lot to live up to. *Braid* cemented him as one of the most interesting and forward-thinking minds in game design, and his new project, *The Witness*, looks to further that reputation.

Imagine staring down a dark hallway leading to a door, which opens to a bedroom that in turn opens to a courtyard, which finally opens to an island that we're free to explore. This, according to Blow, is one of the most important moments in the game. It slowly introduces players to the concept of *Witness'* wide-open world while simultaneously demonstrating how the puzzles throughout the game will work, all while imparting a genuine sense of discovery.

Basically, the puzzles operate like this: On any one of the blue screens strewn throughout the world, there are a series of lines that make up a maze. They start off easy, simply asking the player to navigate a dot from one point to another. Eventually, however, the puzzles begin to ask players to complete increasingly difficult tasks or even solve puzzles based on environmental clues. Within our first hour, we had moved two dots simultaneously, taken cues from birds tweeting, and matched patterns as we walked through garden labyrinths. Each puzzle was designed to make us look at our surroundings in different ways, and they certainly succeeded in doing so.

Of course, this being a Jonathan Blow title, each puzzle has some sort of deeper meaning in the overall narrative of the story. *The Witness* will attempt to be one of those special games that reward players for studying and learning in order to understand what it's trying to do. Frankly, that's something that we could use a lot more of.

4

Starry eyed

Starhawk Creative director Lars DeVore talks Warhawk, Starcraft, and Craft Wars... Maybe not that last one.

Lighting It Up

Austin start-up LightBox Interactive—the studio developing *Starhawk*—might be new on the scene, but the majority of the team consists of *Warhawk* veterans who've worked closely with Sony's famed Santa Monica Studio in the past. DeVore predicts a bright future for the company.

Is *Starhawk* secretly a real-time strategy?

Anyone putting out a shooter right now ends up trying to figure out what they're doing with the shooter genre to differentiate themselves, and what we want to do is make it feel like you have control over the battlefield. Our [mechanics] do seem very similar to RTS elements, but they're done in such a fluid way that we think it will appeal to RTS people, yet it's not going to appeal any less to someone who's all about shooters.

I'm not an RTS player. People are like, "*StarCraft*, it's so much fun," and I'm like, "I'm sure it's fun, it's just me." There's something about the management of stuff that, my ADD kind of like... The fact that you can play different strategies quickly and easily in our game appeals to people like me.

Do you expect people to experiment with different play styles?

One of the things we find when we're doing multiplayer testing in the studio is that some people don't build anything. They're like, "I'm a frontman, get me in the jeep, I'm going up there to take the flag." And then other people say, "Alright, I'm building defenses," and they stand back and they build walls around the base and they put up a bubble shield. It's almost like we're taking some of the different shooter classes and allowing everyone to have access to all of them. Then it's your choice.

How do you expect *Warhawk* fans to react?

It definitely holds the DNA of *Warhawk* in that it's very fast-paced, it's very

arcade-based. We didn't want to change it up, we wanted to add to it, wanted to give players more elements so they can play very much in the way they did, but have it be fresh and new.

We use regenerative health as opposed to health pickups, we moved the character off from center screen, we moved in closer to the character so we can do over the shoulder. We didn't make those changes to move away from *Warhawk*, they were changes that we did to modernize *Warhawk*. And I think we did it in a way that does not take anything away from *Warhawk's* underlying core.

What inspired the sci-fi gold rush setting?

We wanted to do a universe and characters that stood out, that were not military-based or straight sci-fi-based. We started to develop this discussion of, "Okay, if we have two factions, and you play as both of them. Is there some way we can make both sides have some sort of plausible motivation, not just evil on good?"

We also had to figure out what ties these guys together with the "Build and Battle" mechanics. And that's where we came up with buildings that are being deployed from the sky, and it's actually a very construction-heavy, plausible thing that's happening. They don't magically appear on the ground.

Hero Emmett Graves was exposed to a mysterious Rift energy. Did it give him super powers?

He doesn't become a superhero by any means, that's something that we strictly wanted to avoid. We didn't want it to turn into him casting Build and Battle out of his hands. One of the things we really wanted was to keep the game grounded in is this plausibility and workingman vibe. As soon as you turn your main hero into someone who is separated by this very fantastical thing, it really makes him less approachable. So the Rift energy itself is kind of tearing away at him, and he's a bit of a ticking time bomb. As the story progresses you start to see how that affects him.

HEAR THE ENEMY

*Surround sound on the PS3™ requires system software version 3.70 or later. Surround Sound does not work with Blu-ray Disc movies. **On-screen headset updates available on PS3™ systems only. © 2011 Sony Computer Entertainment America LLC. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" and the PlayStation Network logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "SONY" and "make.believe" are trademarks of Sony Corporation. Visit www.us.playstation.com/support/3D for details.

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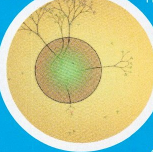
5 Independence pay

Sony doubles down on indie gaming to the tune of $20 million

Good news for indie developers looking to break out on PSN: Sony has announced a major investment for PlayStation exclusive games, with a commitment of $20 million set to be doled out over the next three years. The investment will include financial support of the Pub Fund program—which was originally announced at the 2009 Game Developers Conference, and has helped spawn PSN favorites like *Joe Danger* and *Tales from Space: About a Blob*—in addition to a select group of forthcoming PSN-exclusive titles (including *Payday: The Heist*).

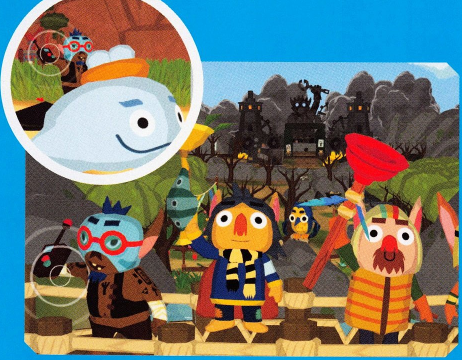
"The initial impetus for the Pub Fund was to provide funding to these independent developers to give them an added layer of freedom to deliver a really compelling game experience," says PSN director of marketing Brandon Stander. With Pub Fund titles, Sony helps with game design and marketing plans, but the developer retains ownership of the game's intellectual property, publishing rights, and determines the pricing.

Going forward, titles for the program will be selected through several different avenues. The first is the PlayStation-edu program, which gives universities and colleges access to PS2 and PSP development kits.



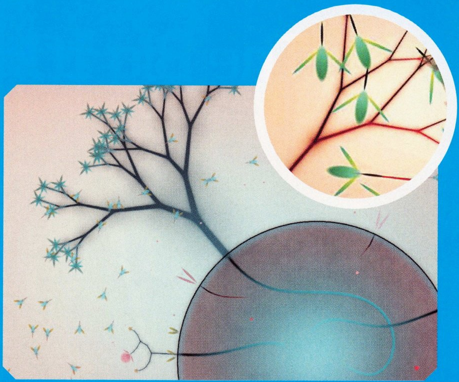
The second way is through events: Sony will be poking around expos like IndieCade, the IGF pavilion at GDC, the special IndieCade area at E3, and other largely indie-focused events in search of program-worthy titles. The company is also working with local groups and government bodies to host developer mixers in an ongoing effort to speak to more people about their work and development potential.

Collectively, it's a move that's likely to keep the wave of quality PSN titles coming. And if Sony can bring in more developers like thatgamecompany and Q Games exclusively to PSN, it may be one of the best things to happen to PS3 to date.



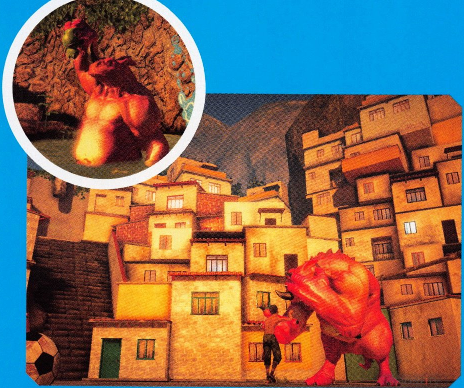
Okabu | ETA Summer

From the London-based HandCircus, creators of the popular iOS game *Rolando*, *Okabu* is centered on controlling two clouds named Kumulo and Nimbe. The game's sandbox world is full of puzzles and play things, and NPCs enable different actions—like a musician that attracts villagers to complete objectives, while the clouds themselves are able to absorb liquids and redistribute them where necessary (think: fire). Best part? The whole thing is playable cooperatively.



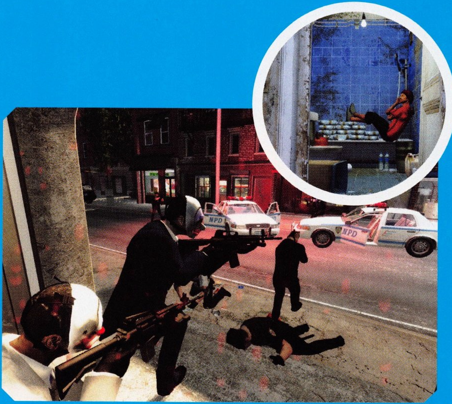
Eufloria | ETA Fall

An "ambient space exploration and conquest title," *Eufloria* tasks us to plant trees and command seeds in order to populate alien worlds with the flora needed for thriving ecosystems. Essentially, it's all about conquest: A series of meteors, asteroids, and other orbiting bodies dot the battle map, to which we must strategically deploy battalions of seeds. If there are enemy seeds already populating a planet, of course, they will fight back.



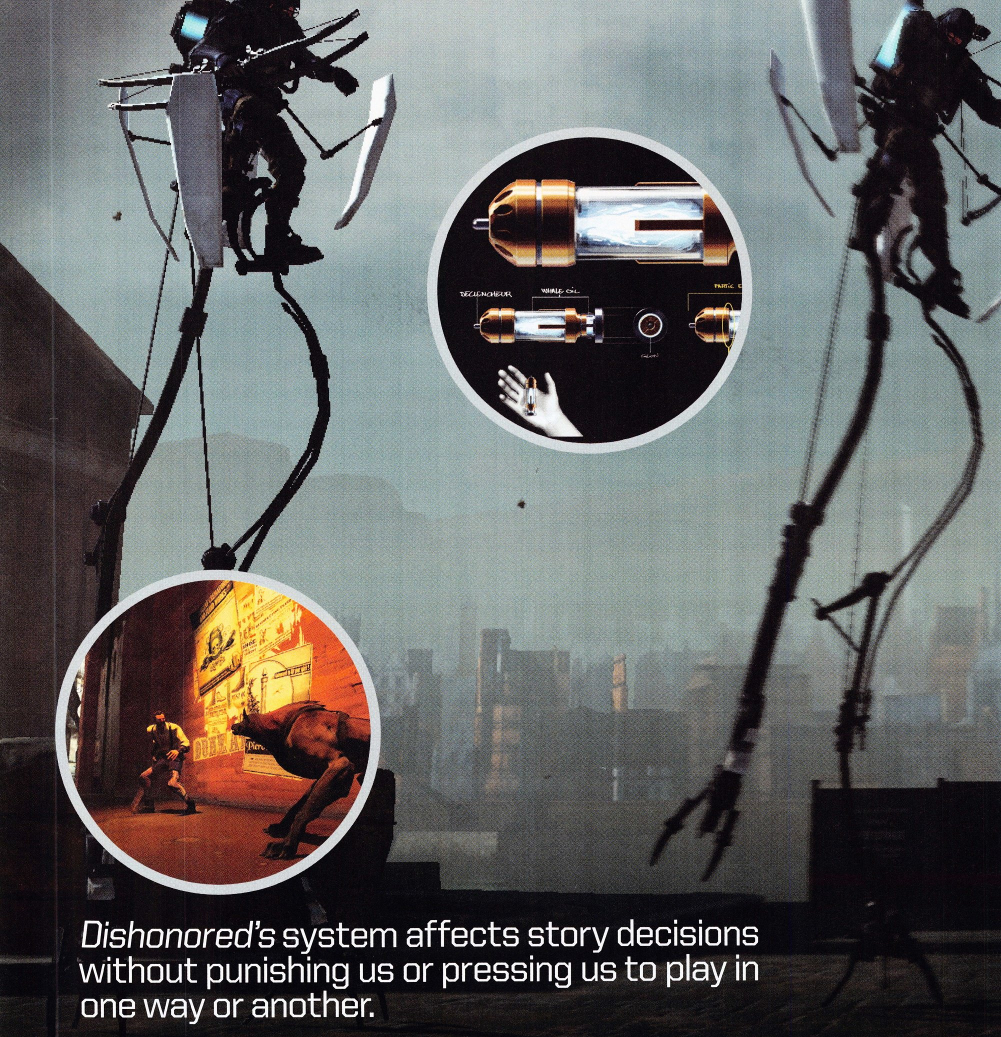
Papo & Yo | ETA 2012

The first title from Montreal-based outfit Minority, *Papo & Yo's* inspiration stems from the childhood experiences of its designer, Vander Caballero, and his father's struggles with alcohol and drug abuse. It's perhaps best understood as a puzzle game with lush 3D landscapes and wild character design, including a frog-eating rhino that represents Caballero's dad. As a young boy named Quico, we'll have to learn to cope with and use this monster's varying emotions to our advantage.

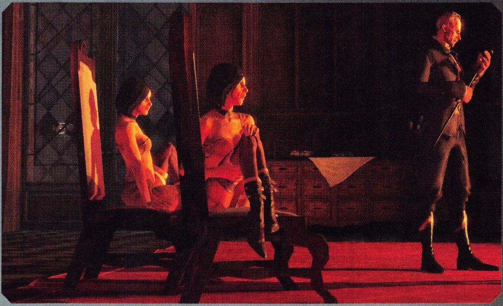


Payday: The Heist | ETA 2012

Payday is a first-person shooter in which we play a career criminal attempting dynamic heists. Crimes are perpetrated by four total partners in crime—controlled by either A.I. or other humans in co-op multiplayer—and include bank robberies, prisoner extractions, and armored car hijackings. Expect resistance from the likes of FBI agents repelling through skylights and SWAT teams crashing through windows. On our side? Trip mines, silenced pistols, machine guns, and strategic planning.


DECLENCHEUR
WHALE OIL
PARTIC

Dishonored's system affects story decisions without punishing us or pressing us to play in one way or another.



Details are scarce, but elements like aristocrats and prostitutes hint at a compelling world for *Dishonored.*

6

Dishonorable mention

Bethesda loads up on design talent for recently revealed Dishonored

Bethesda Softwork's latest signee isn't just any first-person stealth action-adventure (and there are certainly a few). The title is being developed by Arkane Studios, the outfit behind first-person RPGs *Arx Fatalis* and *Dark Messiah of Might and Magic*. To up the ante, the team has brought onboard noted game designers Harvey Smith, co-creator of games like *Deus Ex* and *Thief*, along with Viktor Antonov—the artist who designed *Half-Life 2's* iconic City 17—to work on *Dishonored*.

We assume the role of a legendary bodyguard named Corvo, who is falsely imprisoned for the murder of his client, the Empress. Utilizing his learned on-the-job skills, a ready supply of gadgets, and a host of supernatural powers, Corvo is transformed into a lethal weapon. *Dishonored* is largely a game about assassination: Our primary task is often infiltration, setting up clever traps rather than conventional "sneaking around" stealth gameplay.

The game will also react to how violent we play. A "chaos" system tracks the collateral damage we cause, and the gameworld changes as a result of our actions. Rather than the traditional light- or dark-side tension systems found in games of this sort, *Dishonored's* system affects story decisions without punishing us or pressing us to play in one way or another.

Dishonored appears to be a game about options. We may, for example, stop time and knock stuff off a table to get the guards looking for us in a particular area, then immediately hoof it in another direction. Or perhaps we summon a swarm of rats to attack one guard, and then possess one of the rodents to scamper away in the ensuing chaos. The possibilities in *Dishonored* seem limitless, but we'll have to wait until 2012 to start exploring them.

PESTILENCE

7

Devil's in the details

Itagaki strikes back with Devil's Third

It's been awhile since Tomonobu Itagaki exited the industry spotlight he so clearly enjoyed. Specifically, June 2008, when the outspoken creator of the *Dead or Alive* and revitalized *Ninja Gaiden* franchises left Team Ninja—both apologizing to fans and suing its publisher, Tecmo, on his way out the door.

Three years later, Itagaki is returning with *Devil's Third*, a game his new publisher THQ describes as "a fast-paced action game set in the near future in the wake of a global catastrophe." Being developed by Itagaki's Valhalla Studios in Tokyo, the title has only been shown in trailer form to this point, and Itagaki has been keen to stress that the game is neither a *Ninja Gaiden* nor a *Devil May Cry*-style affair. "Gamers who pay close attention to the trailer will notice there's a substantial difference there," he explains. "So if you think of it as a shooting game that includes a level of melee combat and fighting that has never been done in a shooting game before, that's a good way to think of it."

While details are thin, THQ's executive vice president of core games Danny Bilson has said that his company's decision to publish the game was made swiftly. (According to Bilson, a live demonstration of its unique multiplayer mode was pretty much all he needed.) We do know that the game's fiction is built on the premise of the Kessler Syndrome: Essentially, this posits a fairly realistic scenario in which the density of objects in Earth's orbit (i.e. satellites) is high enough that collisions between objects cause a cascade, destroying all of them in the process. This throws both space exploration and military operations into complete disarray, and sets up what is sure to be another frenetic action game from one of the genre's finest creators.

We're just worried about how all this will affect the reception of our iPhones.

▲ Four new characters are set to join the fray as the comic and game world's collide again.

8 Power Up

Twelve new fighters are headed to the Ultimate edition of Marvel vs. Capcom 3

That's right, less than six months after the release of the standard version of its hyperactive crossover fighter *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*, Capcom has announced *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3*—a $40 stand-alone disc that introduces enhanced game modes (including an online spectator mode), rebalanced gameplay, and, most importantly, 12 brand new characters.

Though Capcom hasn't officially stated whether or not *Ultimate* players will be able to compete online with owners of the original *MvC3* (though if *Super Street Fight IV* was any indication, don't count on it), the company has announced the first four new fighters that will be joining the fray.

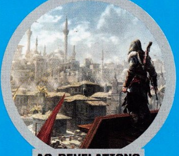
From Capcom: *MvC2* tournament favorite Strider, who first appeared in his own self-titled sidescrolling arcade game back in 1989, and franchise newcomer Firebrand, a gargoyle demon better known for being a real pain in the *Ghost 'n Goblins* series. And from Marvel: Ghost Rider, a fiery, supernatural biker so badass not even Nicolas Cage could stop him, and archery marksman and Avengers member, Hawkeye.

With the addition of these four fighters—as well as the other eight as yet unannounced characters—the complete *UMvC3* roster tops out at an impressive 50 combatants. But who are those other eight? Hopefully we won't have to wait all the way until the game's November release before we find out.

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

What's with you guys? We still don't see *BioShock: Infinite* on this list and we are infinitely disappointed. Sorrow aside; we see some great (and familiar) titles are being coveted. *Modern Warfare 3* remains atop the list for the fourth month in a row. There has been a little shifting through the ranks with *SoulCalibur V* and *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* gaining quick popularity, but otherwise, the positions seem to be remaining consistent for most of the heavy hitters.

01 *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*
02 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
03 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
04 *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*
05 *Madden NFL 12*
06 *Resistance 3*
07 *Final Fantasy XIV*
08 *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*
09 *Twisted Metal*
10 *Batman: Arkham City*
11 *Need for Speed: The Run*
12 *Battlefield 3*
13 *SoulCalibur V*
14 *Mass Effect 3*
15 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
16 *NBA 2K12*
17 *Saints Row: The Third*
18 *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*
19 *FIFA 12*
20 *Max Payne 3*



AC: REVELATIONS

SOULCALIBUR V

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was June 12, 2011, to June 25, 2011.

10 Are online passes bad for gamers?

It used to be free. Now Sony, Ubisoft, EA, and others want to charge to go online.

Yes
Says the dolefully destitute
Anne Lewis

Speaking from a consumer's point of view: I despise online passes. Unlike hotshot Gary Steinman with his fancy "real" job, I have no money 90 percent of the time and can't always afford a new game. Online passes ensure that unless I buy a new copy—which comes with the full online access pass—I'll either have to pay extra or go without. Neither of those sounds appealing.

Excuse me for wanting to save a little money where I can. I understand it's shortsighted and I should be more than willing to put money back in the developer's pockets, but that's a luxury I literally cannot afford.

I'm a bargain hunter. Unless it's a game I absolutely must have on day one, I scope out GameStop and Amazon until I find the best deal. More often than not, the best deal is a used game.

In my mind, when I buy the game it's mine and it should be the complete game. Whether or not I'm buying it new shouldn't be a factor. Telling me I need to pay extra for the total package is like handing me a burger and politely informing me the lettuce, tomato, and onion are all extra (Note: I rarely eat used burgers.)

Frankly, this is really a turf war between rich publishers and retailers over the hugely profitable used game market. So why is it that it's once again the poor consumer who's expected to take the hit?

No
Says the supportive spendthrift
Gary Steinman

We love games. That's why we do this job, and that's why you read this magazine. And who makes games? Developers. And who ponies up the cash to support the developers during these increasingly long and costly dev cycles? The publishers, who take on even more risk when it comes to the massive marketing and distribution budgets of blockbuster releases.

So forgive me if I sound like an apologist for the excesses of capitalism when I say: Let those who make the games reap the rewards. Because, like it or not, it's the publishers and developers who should get every possible penny of profit for the games they make.

These online passes aren't crass anti-consumerism on the part of publishers. They are merely a way to ensure the secondary (used) markets don't put them out of business.

Think I'm exaggerating? How many stories have we heard of studios being shuttered, sending talented development teams out into the cold? And these are often *good* studios that've made *great* games. Sure, the secondary market isn't the only reason for these closures, but they play a role.

As gamers, we need to stop hiding behind this notion of the "right" to resell our games and buy used. It's true, but it's hurting our hobby. So, Anne, pay for the full burger. Otherwise, that burger joint may not be there the next time you're craving some cow meat.

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Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

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Strong Language

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Previews

Quick Pitch

Closure

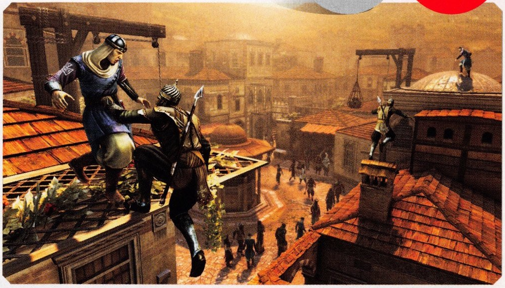
Revelations is the final chapter for Ezio and Altaïr, and continues Desmond Miles' story.

Customization

We can customize our character appearance, emblem, Templar Profile card, and loadouts.

Stealth

Stalking incognito during online matches provides a significant point boost.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal / Ubisoft Annecy**

Assassin's Creed
Revelations

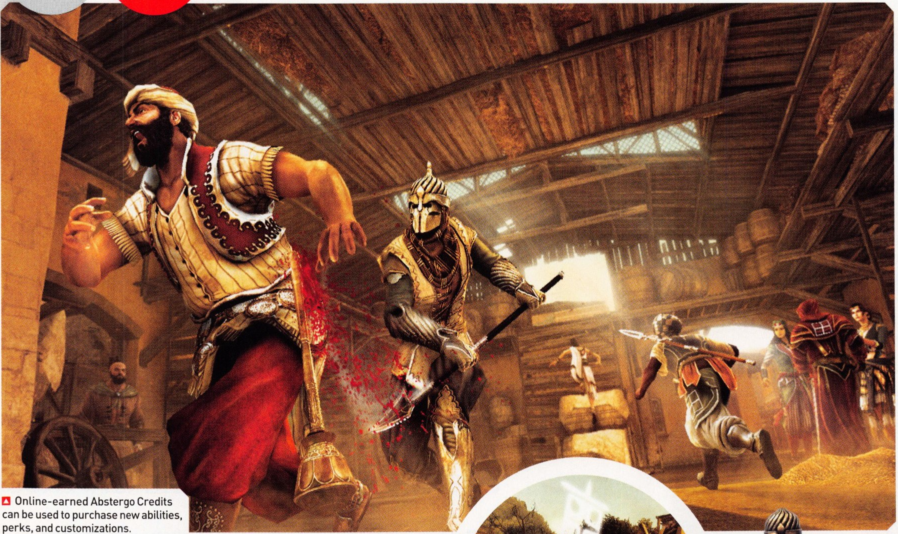
Silent and deadly wins the race

From an Antioch rooftop, we watch an assassin stalk his prey. Quiet and calculated, he follows his target through busy market streets, waiting for the perfect moment to attack. The pair approach a bale of hay, and, for a brief second, the soon-to-be victim stops. Suddenly, a cloud of smoke appears. The stalker has stepped on a defensive trap and is disoriented. His target flees. Now is our time to strike. We vault down from our perch toward our mark—the man still struggling to regain his senses. He blends in with a nearby crowd, but it's too late. We stealthily brush past and poison him without stopping to revel in our imminent victory. Moments later he collapses. Poor guy never knew what hit him—the mark of a true assassin. It is in this moment we are pulled into a nearby haystack and executed. Our killer emerges. He's none other than the man who stunned our target with a Tripwire Bomb. Oh how the tables have turned.

Within the well-lit corridors of Ubisoft Annecy's office in France, we sat down with the developers of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* (specifically, the team behind the game's multiplayer component) to discuss its many improvements. When *Revelations* hits shelves this November, it will bring closure to both Altaïr ibn La-Ahad and Ezio Auditore da Firenze's stories. Though Ubisoft won't divulge much information regarding the single-player campaign, we got plenty of hands-on time with the multiplayer portion. The improvements we've seen so far are exciting and welcome.

Templar's Tale

A key component of *Revelations'* multiplayer is the inclusion of its own storyline that ties in directly with the single-player campaign. Project Live producer Andreane Meunier explains that we fill the role of a Templar-in-training: "This time around, the Abstergo management is actually noticing what you're doing. You're still in training, but now they're going to give you more information on the company, backstory on why you're doing the things you're doing, and give you a behind-the-scenes look at the Templar side of things," she says. ▸▸



Online-earned Abstergo Credits can be used to purchase new abilities, perks, and customizations.

By obtaining experience points and leveling up through online play, we can unlock videos, memos, and secret information about the Templars and their goals.

Traditional cat-and-mouse multiplayer modes, such as Wanted and Manhunt, remain mostly unchanged: Players are assigned an assassination target while a guiding compass leads them toward their mark. New to *Revelations* is the Deathmatch mode, a simplified version of Wanted that takes place in smaller, more refined locations. Instead of a guiding compass, we must rely on line-of-sight to spot our target, as none of the NPCs in Deathmatch resemble any of the players—we are merely shown target portraits that light up when they're within our line of sight, creating a very intense (and extremely fun) "Where's Waldo"-style match.

Also new is a variation of capture-the-flag called Artifact Assault, wherein the map is divided into two halves, one for each team: We can hunt enemy assassin's that seek to steal our artifact while in our defensive half—yet we can only incapacitate our foes temporarily via defensive maneuvers when we infiltrate the enemy's side in hopes of

We can level up through 99 "loops" of 50 experience levels in multiplayer, a feature similar to *Call of Duty's* Prestige mode.

Timeline An Assassin's legacy

2007

Assassin's Creed
(PS3, 2007)
Altaïr ibn La-Ahad battles the Templars for the Apple of Eden

2009

Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines
(PSP, 2009)
Altaïr's story continues

2009

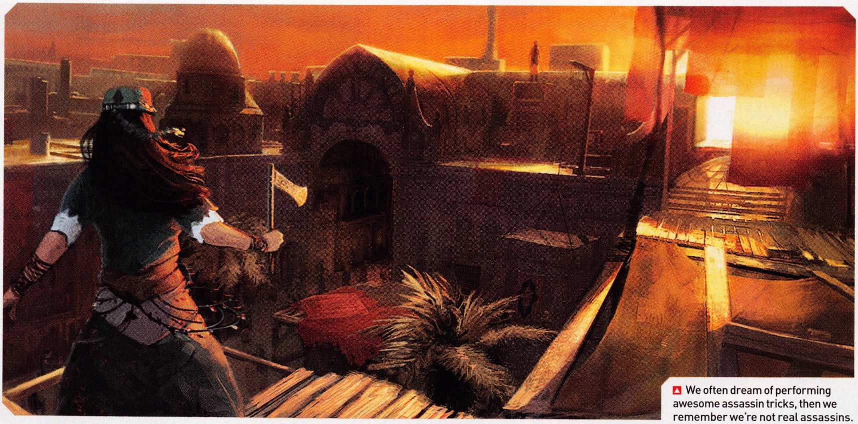
Assassin's Creed II
(PS3, 2009)
Ezio Auditore turns assassin after his family is hanged

2010

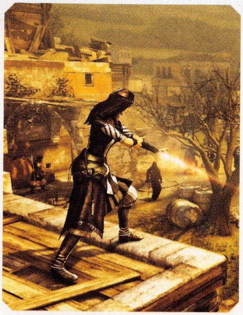
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood
(PS3, 2010)
Ezio cleanses Rome of Borgia influence

2011

Assassin's Creed: Revelations
(PS3, 2011)
The final chapter for both Ezio and Altaïr



We often dream of performing awesome assassin tricks, then we remember we're not real assassins.



> "This time around, the Abstergo management is actually noticing what you're doing." –Andreane Meunier

stealing theirs, requiring us to develop a more strategic approach.

Balancing Act

Damien Kieken, *Revelations'* multiplayer game director, says many new improvements have been implemented to balance out the series' predator-and-prey–style gameplay. "Now the prey are able to perform easier stuns to defend themselves, and we've also implemented what we call the Honorable Death system," says Kieken. "The idea is when an assassin and a prey press the [attack] button at the same moment, we have a new consequence where the prey defending himself gets killed, but both parties get the same amount of points." Similarly, an increased emphasis has been placed on a stealth-based approach to combat. Killing our target after blatantly chasing him in plain sight might score us 150 points, but patiently stalking and stealthily killing him can yield upward of 1,000 points.

New game modes, maps, abilities, and customization options further enhance *Revelation's* multiplayer experience. The new Tripwire Bombs act as proximity stun traps ideal for defensive ploys, while death streaks, such as a Vision streak that enables us to see enemies through walls, provide advantages for novice assassins. Completing multiplayer objectives and matches net us experience points in addition to Abstergo Credits, in-game currency used for purchasing unlockable content. We can customize everything from our player card (known as a Templar Profile) including weapons, taunts, and even character skin appearance. The character skins on NPCs will mimic our customizations to avoid enabling players to easily recognize heavily customized characters during matches.

Additionally, the matchmaking setup has been retooled to allow for content access during the matchmaking process. In the player hub we can compare our stats and scores against our friends, and also initiate dares, which challenge our friends to compete against our top scores for bragging rights. In the data hub, we can access our Templar Profile, unlock content with Abstergo Credits, and access all of the customization options available.

Revelations' multiplayer improvements are certainly a step in the right direction. The balancing tweaks and new modes are a welcomed addition, and, though we remain skeptical of the franchise's annual release cycle, we have high hopes for the much anticipated finale. **RYAN TALJONICK**

Dev Talk

"We are bringing back some of the favorite modes, favorite characters, and favorite maps from *Brotherhood* to allow variety, but all of the new stuff is going to be based on the evolution that we're seeing in the solo campaign."

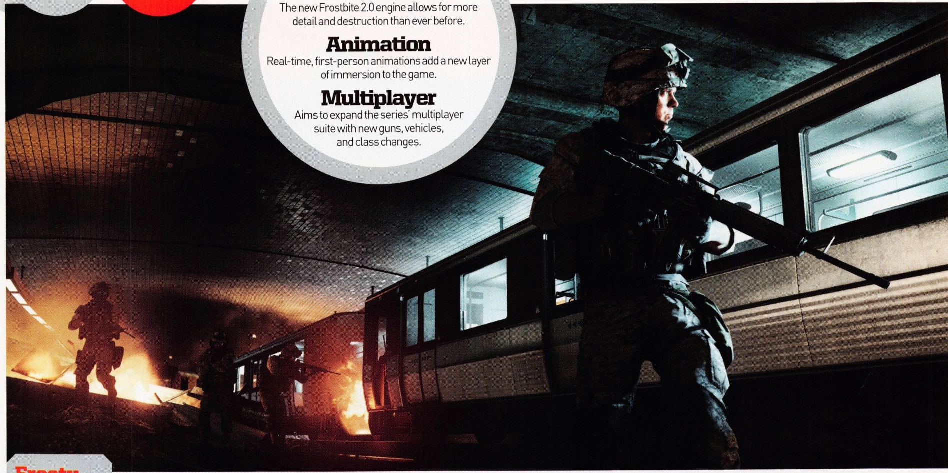
Andreane Meunier
Project Live Producer

Quick Pitch

Realism
The new Frostbite 2.0 engine allows for more detail and destruction than ever before.

Animation
Real-time, first-person animations add a new layer of immersion to the game.

Multiplayer
Aims to expand the series' multiplayer suite with new guns, vehicles, and class changes.



This underground subway station is but a small portion of Operation Metro.

Frosty
Battlefield 3's warfare-enhancing pillars

Animation
First-person animations show soldiers standing up, jumping over objects, and sliding into cover.

Destruction
We love watching structures collapse. Thanks to Frostbite 2.0, buildings are more destructible than ever before.

Lighting
Battlefield 3's dynamic lighting is unmatched in complexity and realism.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **DICE**

Battlefield 3

The war front just got a whole lot bigger

We were losing—and fast. Before we realized what was happening, M-Com Station A—one of our defensive objectives—was destroyed. Bullets whizzed by seemingly from all directions as we scrambled for cover.

Controlling the new Support class, we crouched next to a cement barricade and utilized our M249 Light Machine Gun's deployable bipod, increasing our weapon's range and accuracy. We lay down suppressive fire after settling into a solid defensive position, allowing our teammates to fortify M-Com Station B. A loud crack from a sniper rifle sounds in the distance and a nearby teammate is felled; we look over to see him reaching out to us for help before breathing his last breath. Not wanting to be on the receiving end of a sniper shot, we go prone behind cover, inching our way forward in hopes of eliminating the marksman. Bits of cement chip away under the force of our foe's MKII Sniper Rifle, and we briefly observe the glint on the scope of his weapon amongst the green hills in the distance; a steady burst of fire from our trusty machine gun yields a dead enemy sniper. Yet our celebration is cut short when friendly radio chatter tells us to fall back—M-Com Station B has been lost.

Combat Maneuvers

Battlefield 3 promises an unparalleled level of realism and strategy: Sure, we're excited for the big changes, such as the implementation of a new game engine, Frostbite 2.0, which boasts an impressive increase in game detail and environmental destruction; we're also intrigued by the addition of new weapons, vehicles, and class changes, wherein the Assault class can revive fallen soldiers with defibrillators, and the new Support class can replenish our teammates' ammo while employing light machine guns. Yet it was the game's subtle changes, such as its new first-person animations, that impressed us the most.

We stood from the prone position while a first-person-perspective animation showed our soldier pushing himself up with his hands. As we ran toward our next objective, we encountered a waist-high fence; another animation displayed our character grabbing the fence and swinging his legs over the obstruction. Shortly afterward, the enemy force opened fire from behind and we toggled the prone control during a dead sprint—our soldier realistically slid to the ground, clambering forward on his hands and knees to take cover once more.

Battlefield 3 is shaping up to be one hell of a shooter: Devastating explosions, gorgeous visuals, and impressive audio quality have us eagerly awaiting the game's arrival on October 25. RYAN TALJONICK

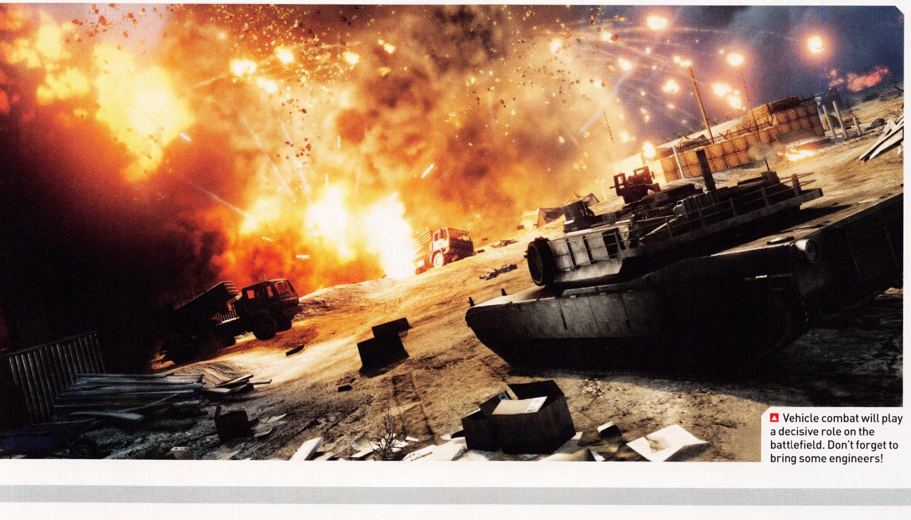
00:00
1st train
2nd train

Utilizing the strengths of each of *Battlefield 3's* classes is a necessity for multiplayer success.

M 7 Malh
Gar
St-

Steven's friends remain speechless about his insatiable desire to "go for a ride on the escalator."

The Frostbite 2.0 engine allows stunning, detailed visuals to be fully integrated into large-scale maps.



Vehicle combat will play a decisive role on the battlefield. Don't forget to bring some engineers!

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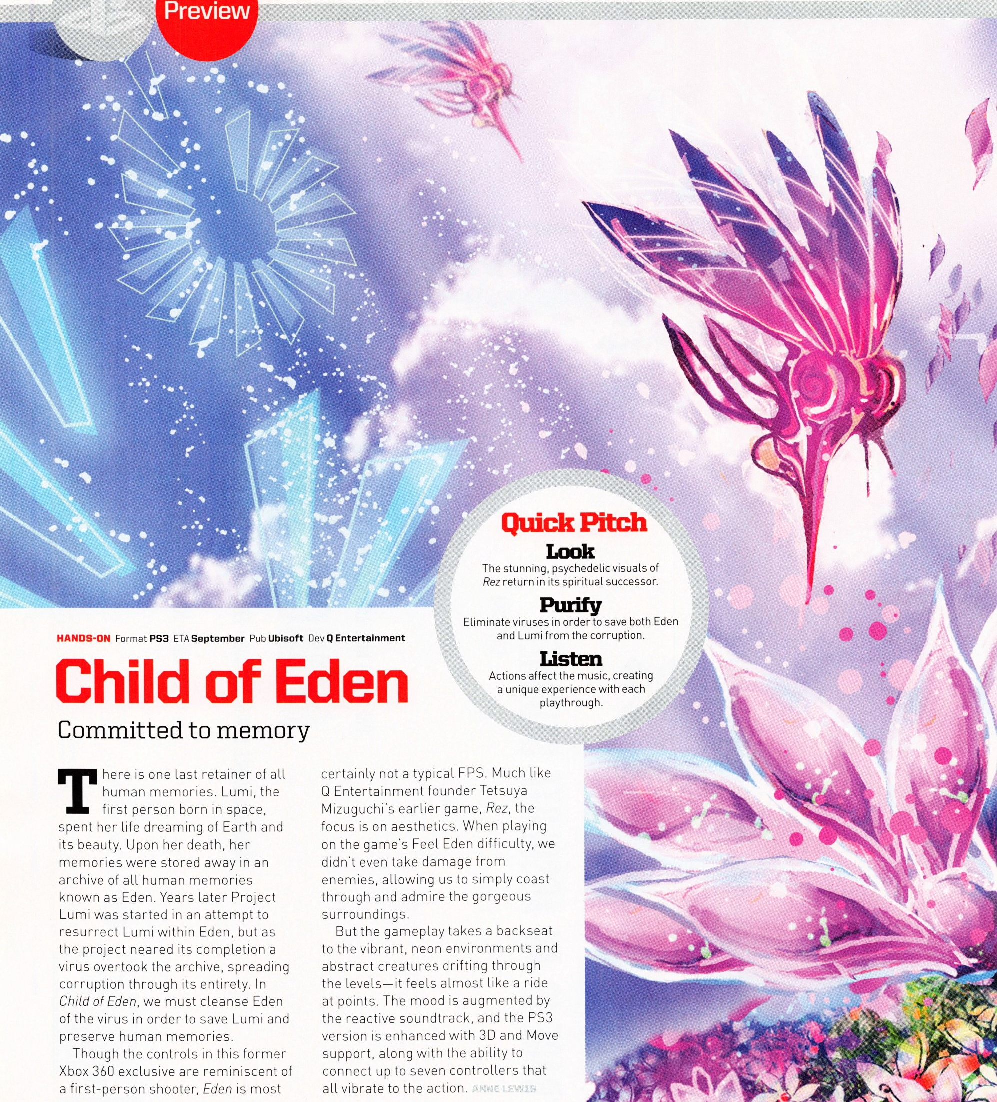


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Q Entertainment**

Child of Eden

Committed to memory

There is one last retainer of all human memories. Lumi, the first person born in space, spent her life dreaming of Earth and its beauty. Upon her death, her memories were stored away in an archive of all human memories known as Eden. Years later Project Lumi was started in an attempt to resurrect Lumi within Eden, but as the project neared its completion a virus overtook the archive, spreading corruption through its entirety. In *Child of Eden*, we must cleanse Eden of the virus in order to save Lumi and preserve human memories.

Though the controls in this former Xbox 360 exclusive are reminiscent of a first-person shooter, *Eden* is most certainly not a typical FPS. Much like Q Entertainment founder Tetsuya Mizuguchi's earlier game, *Rez*, the focus is on aesthetics. When playing on the game's Feel Eden difficulty, we didn't even take damage from enemies, allowing us to simply coast through and admire the gorgeous surroundings.

But the gameplay takes a backseat to the vibrant, neon environments and abstract creatures drifting through the levels—it feels almost like a ride at points. The mood is augmented by the reactive soundtrack, and the PS3 version is enhanced with 3D and Move support, along with the ability to connect up to seven controllers that all vibrate to the action. ANNE LEWIS

Quick Pitch

Look

The stunning, psychedelic visuals of *Rez* return in its spiritual successor.

Purify

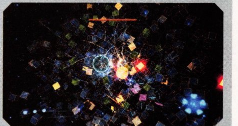
Eliminate viruses in order to save both Eden and Lumi from the corruption.

Listen

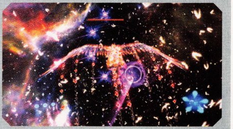
Actions affect the music, creating a unique experience with each playthrough.

Harmonic Convergence

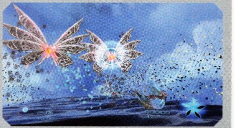
The Five Spheres of Eden



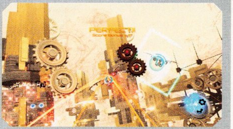
1 Matrix



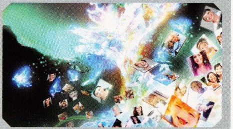
2 Evolution



3 Beauty



4 Passion



5 Journey

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **2K Sports** Dev **Visual Concepts**

NBA 2K12

Legendary performance

Last season was a breakout year for the *NBA 2K* franchise. *2K11* sported class-leading visuals and presentation, superior gameplay skills, and sealed the deal with its Michael Jordan mode fan service.

How does 2K Sports follow up a season like that? Well, if playing as the NBA's greatest player was awesome, surrounding his Airness with 14 other legends is simply fan-tastic. *2K12's* new Greatest Players mode allows us to re-experience the awesome skills of players like Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Julius Erving in the most entertaining game (as determined by 2K Sports) of their career. A victory unlocks the legend's team and their opponent team for play against contemporary NBA squads.

But the additional fan service wouldn't mean a thing without an upshot in gameplay. We don't often make pre-season predictions, but our hands-on time with *2K12* indicate that it's raised its game. Gone is last year's slight animation lag that sapped some of the on-court action's spontaneity and flow. The expanded roster of moves can now be interrupted at any time allowing for a near limitless range of shots and play outcomes.

That kind of improvement in control crispness, response, and fluidity is the type of nuance that raises a game from all-star to legendary status. At this rate, we may not even notice if the NBA season gets cancelled.

ROGER BURCHILL

LAKERS

We expect *2K12's* Magic Johnson to be smiling as he drives a dagger into our championship amibitions.

DALLAS
41
HASLEY
40
SIXERS
6
BULLS
23

There's no official confirmation that the Miami Heat have begun referring to nightmares as "Nowitzkis."

Before Michael Jordan, it was Dr. J who ruled the skies. Perhaps we can arrange an on-court meeting...

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◀ The development team briefly explained why Ivy doesn't actually look any older despite the time gap between games, but we couldn't quite follow...

Quick Pitch

Demon Dog

All bets are off as Project Soul unveils Zwei and his ghostly canine sidekick.

Mech Attack

All-new game mechanics mean this could be the deepest *SoulCalibur* ever.

Boobs, Boobs, Boobs

Ivy returns...but in surprisingly modest garb! Read all the shocking details here!

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Project Soul**

SoulCalibur V

Time to mix it up a little

Frankly it almost doesn't seem fair to weaponize the disembodied spirit of a bloody-thirsty wolf, but supernatural fighter Zwei has done just that. In addition to his distinctly gothic broadsword, Zwei can incorporate his incorporeal canine into certain special attacks, commanding it to maul his opponents. It's a first for *SoulCalibur*, which has traditionally remained rooted in reality (more or less). But according to lead producer Hisaharu Tago, many of *SoulCalibur V's* 10 to 15 new characters will feature "brand-new fighting styles."

Fantastical new fighters aren't the only change coming to *SoulCalibur*, though. In addition to the *Street Fighter*-style ultra combos and powered-up special attacks that Project Soul showed off at E3, a more recent demo displayed more new mechanics: a timed block called "Just Guard" that allows advanced players to turn opponent's attacks back against them; launcher moves designed to catapult the opposition into the air for juggle combos; and elaborate throws that utilize cinematic camera angles.

Having historically been a tightly balanced but relatively straightforward fighting franchise, these mechanics add some new complexity to *SoulCalibur's* formula. Yet, all the recognizable facets remain intact, with weapons, ring outs, and boobs aplenty. Even new characters Natsu, Pyrrha, and Patroklos seem to be analogs of classic characters Taki and Sophita, respectively. So with the developers promising "fast, more elegant fighting," perhaps Project Soul's new approach will lead to the strongest *SoulCalibur* yet. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

▲ *SoulCalibur V* has adopted a very broad definition of "weapons."

▲ Over half of the game's 20 to 30 characters will be new. Will your favorite make the cut?

Art Attack

Prepare to fight

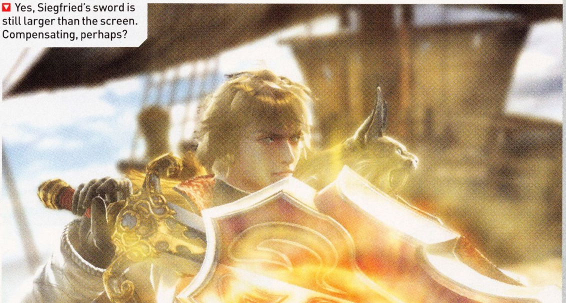
Ivy

Natsu

Zwei

Pyrrha

Yes, Siegfried's sword is still larger than the screen. Compensating, perhaps?



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Black Box**

Need for Speed

The Run

Running on all cylinders

The Gumball Rally. The Cannonball Run. There's just something about a no-holds-bar dash across America that captures our imagination. Toss in relentless cops, ruthless killers, and remove the specter of suspended licenses and skyrocketing insurance rates and we're sold.

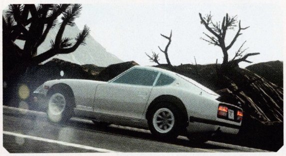
Our first spin in *Need for Speed: The Run* came at E3 and featured a high-speed, chopper-in-pursuit, bulletfest of a chase through the streets of Chicago. But a foot-bound rooftop excursion, QTE-fueled cop car jacking, and a narrow trainwreck escape left us concerned about this *Speed's* speed focus.

For our most recent test drive, however, Electronic Arts came equipped with assurances that *The Run* is very much about the driving. The Desert Hills segment had us piloting a Porsche GT3 RS on narrow two-lane highways reminiscent of those approaching Las Vegas. Our goal was to pass 10 of the game's 200 supercar-equipped opponents—while desperately seeking off-road shortcuts and avoiding surface traffic—before we reached the finish line. What ensued was a furious contact-heavy contest against vicious A.I. drivers who didn't hesitate to mirror our dirty driving tactics.

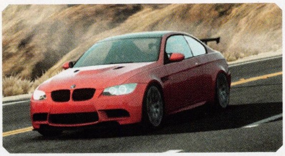
While the experience is arcade oriented (aggressive driving is rewarded with speed boost), we were pleasantly surprised by the precision required to pilot our ride. *The Run* is already exhibiting a fair share of high-octane thrills and we've still yet to experience of the game's promised movie-blockbuster-style action sequences. ROGER BURCHILL

Crunch Buggy The rides we spotted

Porsche 911 GT3 RS Our oversteer-happy ride



Datsun 240Z A Japanese classic



BMW M3 The ultimate driving machine

Quick Pitch

The Run

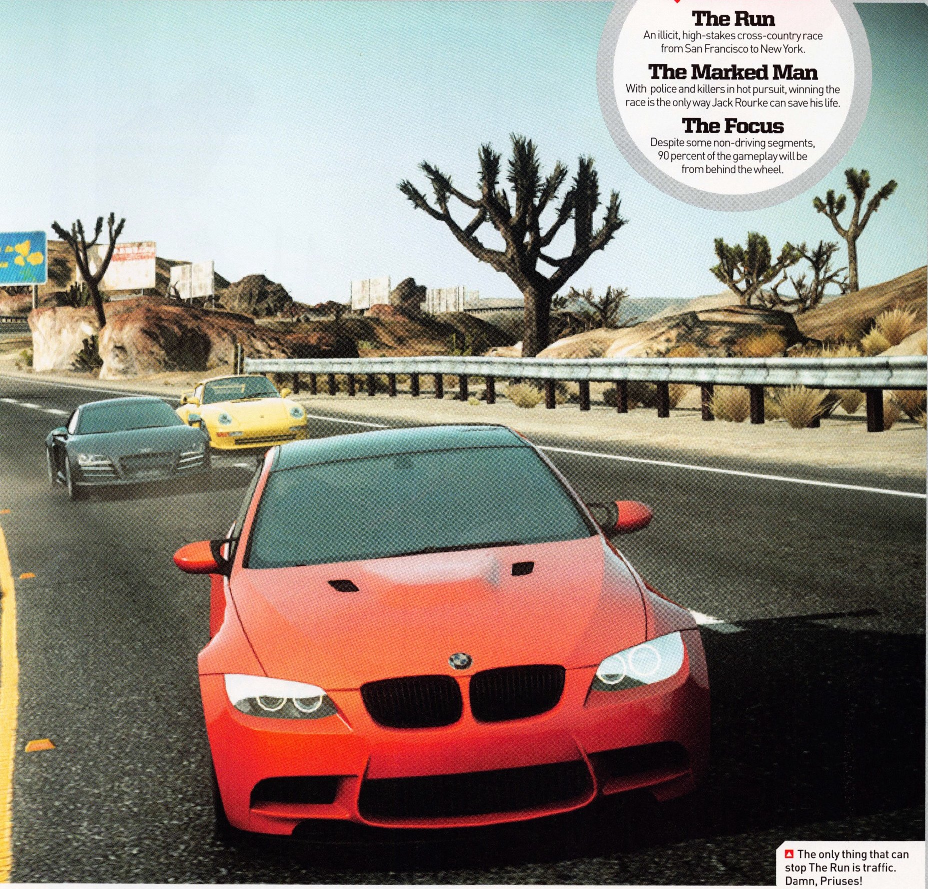
An illicit, high-stakes cross-country race from San Francisco to New York.

The Marked Man

With police and killers in hot pursuit, winning the race is the only way Jack Rourke can save his life.

The Focus

Despite some non-driving segments, 90 percent of the gameplay will be from behind the wheel.

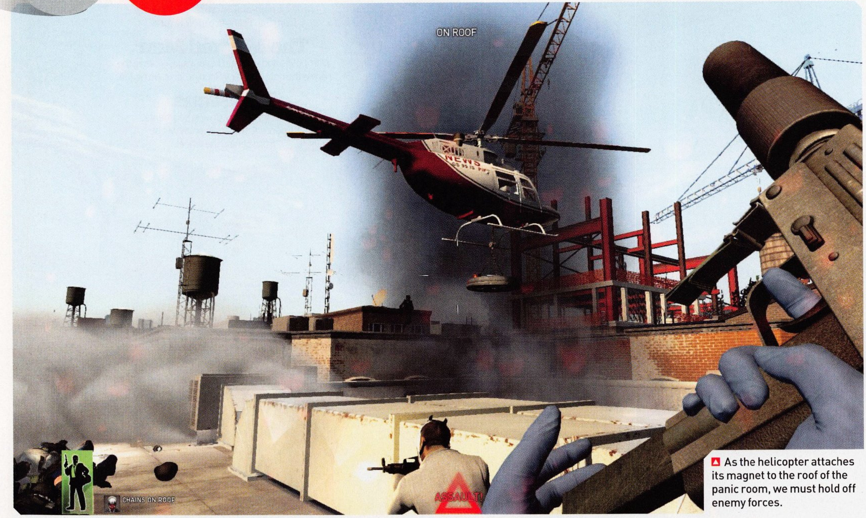


▲ The only thing that can stop The Run is traffic. Damn, Priuses!

Audi R8 German for chick-magnet

Ford GT500 When standard muscle won't do

McLaren MP4-12C The next uber-supercar?



As the helicopter attaches its magnet to the roof of the panic room, we must hold off enemy forces.

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **Sony Online Ent.** Dev **Overkill Software**

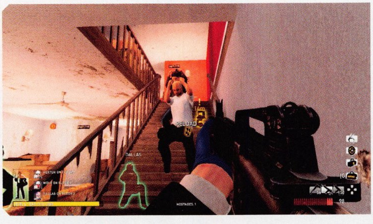
Payday The Heist

Pulling off the perfect crime

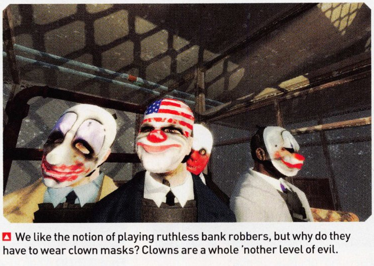
By the time the drug dealers realized our phony cash offering was a ruse, it was too late. Our target—$8 million in cold, hard cash—was located in a panic room on the third floor of their crack house. We don our robbery masks before eliminating the guards on the stairway leading to the second floor. That's when all hell breaks loose. Minutes later, the armed drug dealers are dead, but police (and eventually S.W.A.T. teams) start swarming the building as we franticly position buzzsaws on the ceiling below and floor above the locked-down panic room. Our objective? To blow the roof off the building, cut out the supports, and remove the *entire room* by helicopter.

Simon Viklund, creative director of *Payday: The Heist*, cited Valve's first-person zombie shooter, *Left 4 Dead*, as one of the PSN game's influences—and it shows. Up to four players must work together to survive waves of armed police through each of the game's six intense robbery scenarios. Using the Intimidate button, we can scare off wounded enemies and capture hostages, which must be released in order to respawn a fallen teammate. Completing heist objectives and downing special foes nets us experience points. Leveling up unlocks new items, weapons, and passive team bonuses like augmented armor and accuracy through three different leveling trees. *Heist* just might be the fix we need for some virtual, high-stakes robbery action.

RYAN TALJONICK



Hostages can be used as leverage to revive our fallen teammates. Be sure to capture civilians whenever possible.



We like the notion of playing ruthless bank robbers, but why do they have to wear clown masks? Clowns are a whole 'nother level of evil.

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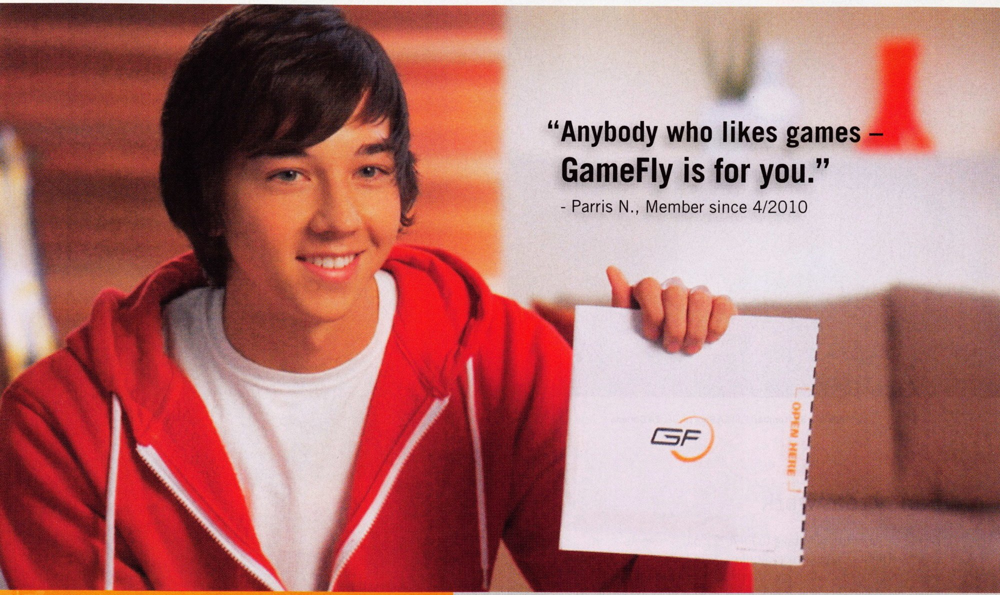
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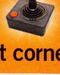
2 Click the  in top right corner

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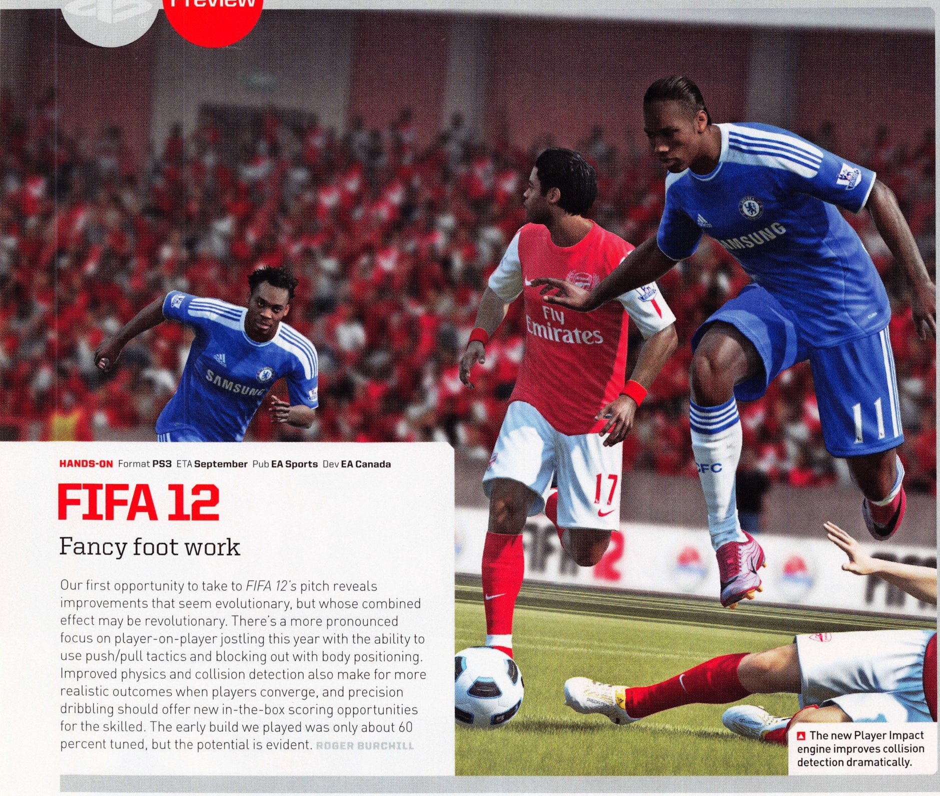


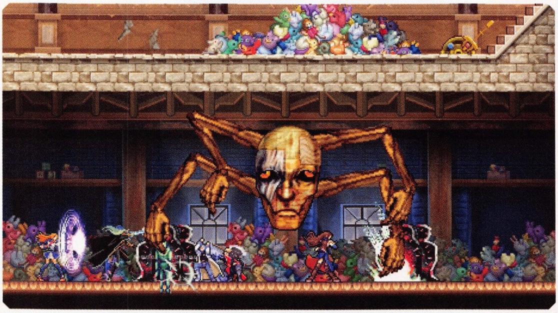
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

FIFA 12

Fancy foot work

Our first opportunity to take to *FIFA 12's* pitch reveals improvements that seem evolutionary, but whose combined effect may be revolutionary. There's a more pronounced focus on player-on-player jostling this year with the ability to use push/pull tactics and blocking out with body positioning. Improved physics and collision detection also make for more realistic outcomes when players converge, and precision dribbling should offer new in-the-box scoring opportunities for the skilled. The early build we played was only about 60 percent tuned, but the potential is evident. **ROGER BURCHILL**

▲ The new Player Impact engine improves collision detection dramatically.



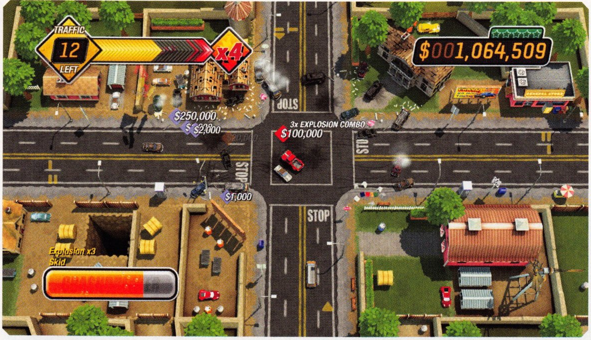
FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **Konami** Dev **Konami**

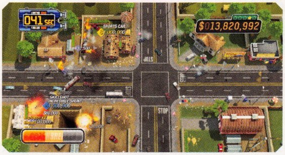
Castlevania

Harmony of Despair

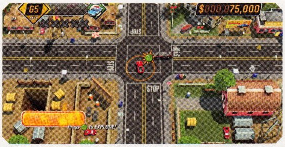
Dracula's dungeon crawling

Though it might look like a high-definition remake of a game from the '90s, *Harmony of Despair* ain't your daddy's *Castlevania*. Sure, it contains some of the same tried-and-true enemies to fight and locations to explore that the series is known for, but this is an adventure meant for a party to experience together. Up to six players can join online (or four players offline) to crawl through several enormous 2D





In Pile Up mode, we try to cause a large-scale traffic jam before exploding autos with the Inferno powerup.



HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Criterion Games**

Burnout Crash

A bite-sized crash experience

When the developers at Criterion Games told us their biggest influences in the development of *Burnout Crash* included pinball, game shows, and music from the '80s and '90s, they certainly weren't kidding.

Crash is a top-down, arcade-style take on the *Burnout* series' renowned Crash mode, wherein the goal is to cause as much vehicular destruction as possible; when our Crashbreaker meter fills up, we can cause an explosion with our vehicle, damaging nearby automobiles or buildings while launching our machine of destruction in the air. When airborne, we can direct it into oncoming traffic for even more points; the result is a distinct pinball feel where our vehicle acts as a moveable flipper that prevents traffic—the pinball—from escaping the onscreen play area.

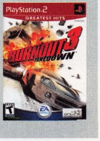
In Rush Hour mode, we have 90 seconds to wreak as much havoc as possible; destroying special vehicles—such as the pizza truck—results in a prize wheel (think *Wheel of Fortune*) that allows us a chance for score-boosting bonuses or painful handicaps: In one case a bulldozer cleared our traffic-catching web of incapacitated autos while the Salt-N-Pepa song "Push It" teased in the background.

Additional game modes and vehicles can be unlocked as the game progresses, and we can even face off against friends through turn-based Autolog challenges. After setting a high score, we can ping friends with our race statistics, challenging and egging them on to beat our record. Should they accept and succeed, we're presented the opportunity to try and one-up them once more.

RYAN TALJONICK

Crash Back

Burnout Crash's inspiration came from *Burnout 3: Takedown*'s popular Crash mode. There's nothing like plummeting into intersections at blistering speeds with the intent to cause explosive destruction.



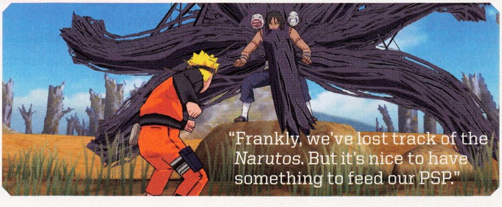
levels while collecting equippable items to improve their characters.

These item buffs are needed, too—*Despair* can be extremely difficult, especially if attempted alone (not recommend). It's not even the traditional foes that end up being the problem, either. Each dungeon is capped off with an absolutely massive boss, some of which are as large as anything found in other *Castlevania* games. Alone, slaying these beasts might seem like an insurmountable task, but with friends at the side there's good fun to be had in mastering the levels and gaining the power needed to take them down. In many ways, it plays more like a Boss Rush mode than a traditional *Castlevania* adventure, so fans shouldn't expect any semblance of story or a wealth of content, but those looking for some old-school flavor need not despair.

HOLLANDER COOPER

One Trick Pony

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Impact (Namco Bandai)



"Frankly, we've lost track of the *Narutos*. But it's nice to have something to feed our PSP."

The latest on...

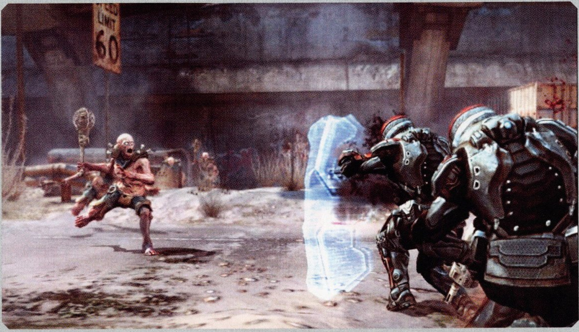
New shots, new games, new info

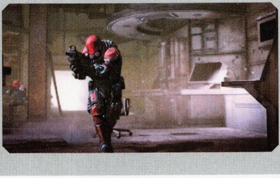
Rage

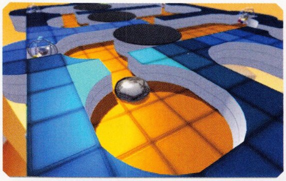
Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Bethesda** Dev **id Software**

This isn't our daddy's dystopian first-person shooter. After a giant asteroid crashes into the Earth, those still alive struggle to make their ways in a horrific new world by any means necessary. Roving gangs of bandits, an oppressive force known as the Authority, and mutants (because what apocalyptic game would be complete without them) have made their homes in the Wasteland. In *Rage* we play as a survivor emerging from underground to find the world already settled into this new way of life.

Color us excited as renowned developer id Software prepares to release its first fresh IP (powered by its all-new id Tech-5 engine) in 15 years.



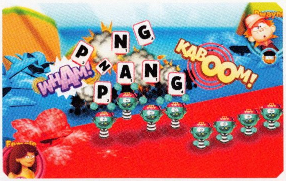




Mercury Hg

Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **Ignition** Dev **Ignition**

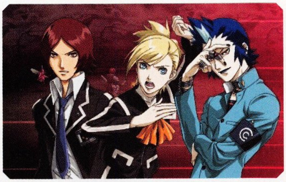
The amorphous blob from the PSP is back for more table tilt challenges, now with Sixaxis controls to maneuver past obstacles and hazards. Over one hundred levels and leaderboards will let players test their skills.



Quarrel

Format **PSN** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Ignition** Dev **Ignition**

A battle of words is an apt description for *Quarrel*. Players meet on a battlefield and must unscramble a word jumble to accumulate more points than their opponent in order to invade enemy territory.



Persona 2: Innocent Sin

Format **PSP** ETA **September** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Atlus**

Taking place a few years after the first *Persona*, *Innocent Sin* is part one of the *Persona 2* series being ported to PSP. Tatsuya Suou is looking into frightening rumors spreading through his hometown in this JRPG.

Final Fantasy XIII-2

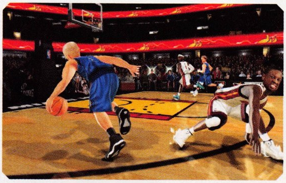
Format **PS3** ETA **January** Pub/Dev **Square Enix**

FFXIII-2 revolves around Noel and Serah as the pair search for Lightning, who has been missing since the end of *FFXIII*. We'll finally receive the answer to the question raised by the first game: Is Lightning really happy?

The Adventures of Tintin

Format **PSN** ETA **Q4** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft**

Tintin makes his game debut, alongside the new film, in a platforming adventure that takes him around the world later this year. Solve puzzles and unravel mysteries either solo or with a friend in over 20 environments.



NBA Jam: On Fire Edition

Format **PSN** ETA **October** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

Additions promising to right the wrongs made by last year's release of *NBA Jam* have been integrated into the game. Modes including the classic Tag mode and Team Fire will finally be available to fans of the NBA arcade series.

The Sims 3 Pets

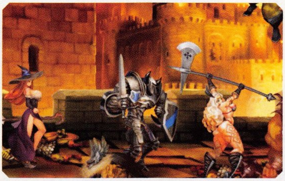
Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **EA** Dev **The Sims Studio**

The Sims 3 Pets is like having a real pet we can solve mysteries with and shape into the perfect companion. So it's actually not like having a real pet. It's so much better. Command the beasties to eat, love, roll over, play dead, and destroy.

Zombie Apocalypse 2

Format **PSN** ETA **TBA** Pub **Konami** Dev **Nihilistic**

Kill every damn zombie in sight using the weapons and skills in the character's arsenal. *Zombie Apocalypse 2* mixes the arena-based fights of the first game with narrative-driven roaming to keep things interesting.



Dragon's Crown

Format **PS3/Vita** ETA **Spring 2012** Pub **Ignition** Dev **Vanillaware**

Dragon's Crown is heading onto both PS3 and Vita, with possible interoperability options. The dungeon-crawling adventure will feature both solo and co-op play while we search through a labyrinth for a legendary treasure.

Gut Reaction

The right and the blight

▲M for Mature
We appreciate gameplay, but we're glad *Twisted Metal* isn't backing off a Mature rating. Bring on the gore, Jaffe!

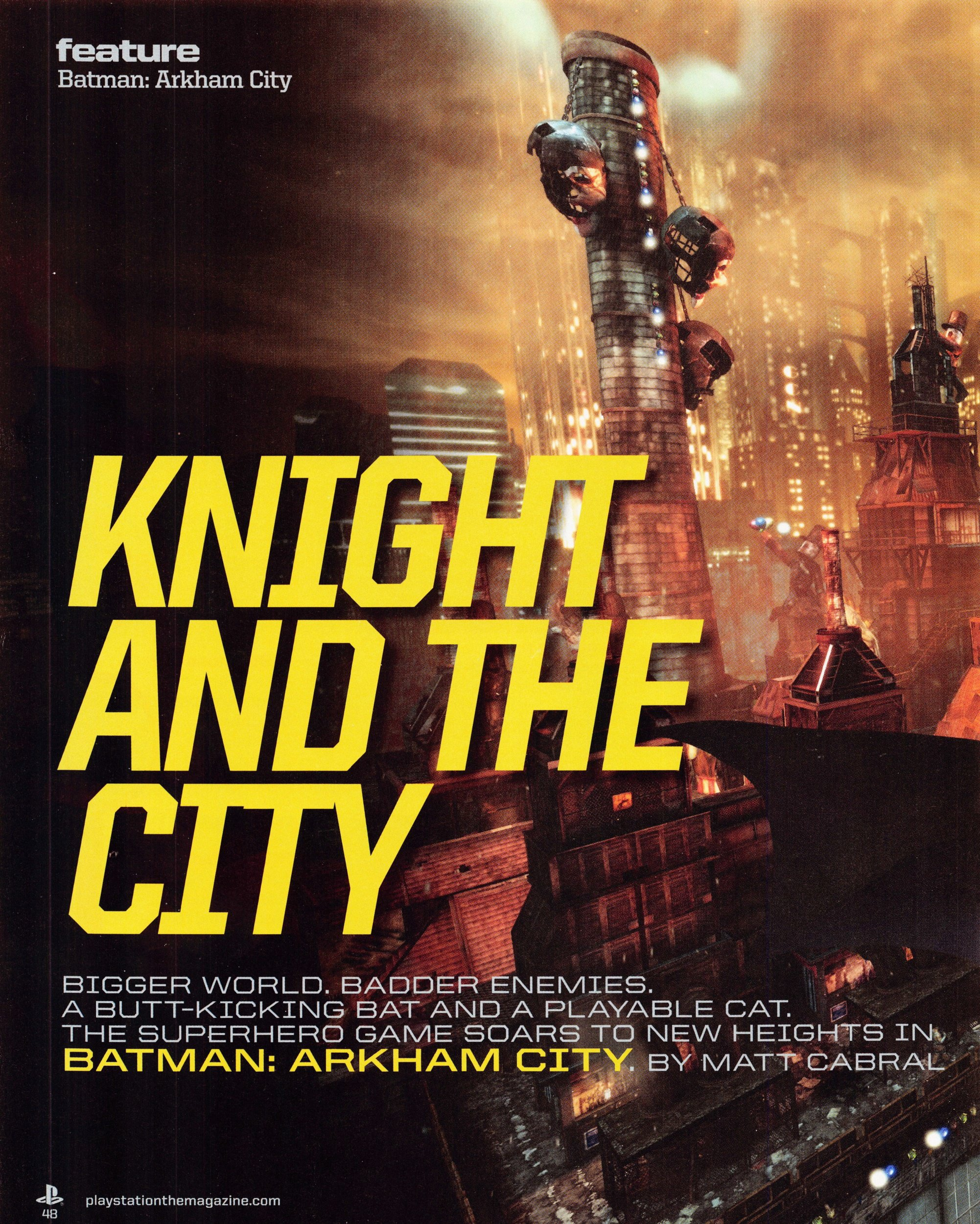
▲Tag, We're It
Thanks to the *Tekken* game/movie hybrid blu-ray, we'll demo *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* early.

▲ Catfight!
Street Fighter meets Hello Kitty? That level of adorable may break us.

▼Steinman Out
This issue we mourn the loss of our head honcho, Gary Steinman...to GamesRadar.com. He will be remembered.

▼Dead Faction
After poor sales for *Armageddon*, THQ has decided to kill the *Red Faction* series, though we can't say we entirely blame them.

▼Just Give Up
Duke Nukem Forever has some DLC coming out this fall, but we really wish it didn't.



KNIGHT AND THE CITY

BIGGER WORLD. BADDER ENEMIES. A BUTT-KICKING BAT AND A PLAYABLE CAT. THE SUPERHERO GAME SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS IN **BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY**.

BY MATT CABRAL

W
ENT
FREAKS

Format PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** Warner Bros. Interactive Ent. **Dev** Rocksteady Studios

If 1997's Joel Schumacher-directed *Batman & Robin* taught us one thing—well, besides that even George Clooney can't make bat-nipples work—it's that bigger doesn't always equate to better. Bloated with ridiculously over-the-top characters and silly set pieces, the universally hated movie haunted us until Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* washed the image of an ice-skating Dynamic Duo from our minds. While films and videogames are very different beasts, we can't help but recall Schumacher's franchise-tarnishing film when we spy *Batman: Arkham City's* brimming roster of bad guys. While names like Two-Face, Riddler, Joker, Penguin, and Harley Quinn get our geek pulses racing, the discerning gamer in us also wants some assurance that their voracious personalities won't overshadow the atmospheric immersion that defined *Batman: Arkham Asylum.*

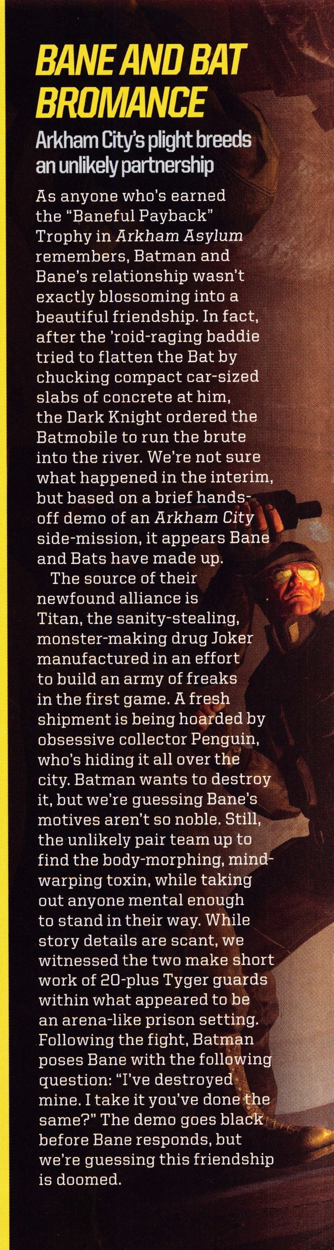
Thankfully, Rocksteady Studio's marketing game manager Dax Ginn arrived at our exclusive meeting with a utility belt full of assurances. The public face of the franchise—as well as a man who lives and breathes the Bat—Ginn first addressed our concerns by assuring *Arkham City's* many menaces weren't merely crammed-in cameos. "Every aspect of the game is really character-driven, that's something that was absolutely critical to the design of the interaction between Batman and these villains." Referencing the character-exploring benefits of the title's 40 hours of content, Ginn continues, "Characters, especially villains, need time to breathe; you really need to be able to plumb the depths of the things that make them interesting."

CLASSY CROOKS

Relieved we won't be running into any villains shoehorned in just to deliver some cheesy dialogue (we're looking at you, Mr. Freeze), we still wondered how all these criminal masterminds will be woven into the larger narrative fabric. After all, how can Joker—who stole more scenes than an art thief in *Arkham Asylum*—possibly share the spotlight with other top-tier Bat-tormentors? Well, apparently, he doesn't have to; while the title's villainous lineup puts the FBI's Most Wanted list to shame, the murdering psychopaths have been carefully crafted around their own storylines and gameplay scenarios. Sure, their motives and narratives intertwine to some extent, but players will face them on the critical path, as well as in optional side-missions and Riddler challenges. And while "optional" content understandably conjures thoughts of collecting useless junk to unlock concept art, Ginn squashes that notion like a kitten in Killer Croc's jaws. "We were sternly against offering side-missions that were flippant or frivolous; we absolutely don't feel that going to collect 50 flowers is the sort of thing that Batman would ever do when Gotham's burning."

Players can also count on interacting with the criminally insane in ways that place believable character interactions above all else. Batman won't simply be progressing through a *God of War*-like gauntlet of increasingly tougher bosses, but will meet his foes in ways that make sense for each villain. From Penguin's fuming hate for the justice-keeping vigilante, to Riddler's more playful button-pushing approach, every encounter is designed with each of the villains' defining traits, combat strategies, and specific brand of Bat-terrorizing in mind. "Players will be taking on these villains in a way that feels very natural to their characteristics," adds Ginn.

Gathering further specifics from Ginn proved more difficult than getting Bruce Wayne to friend us on Facebook. Still, he did offer a few fan-enticing tidbits: Apparently, there's a physical fist-to-face Riddler meeting for those willing to brave all his trap rooms, puzzles, hostage-rescues, and wild goose chases. And those unconvinced that the Clown Prince of Crime will get enough breathing room to taunt Batman can chew on this: "The Joker deserves as much screen time as possible, and his relationship with Harley is explored further."



BANE AND BAT BROMANCE

Arkham City's plight breeds an unlikely partnership

As anyone who's earned the "Baneful Payback" Trophy in *Arkham Asylum* remembers, Batman and Bane's relationship wasn't exactly blossoming into a beautiful friendship. In fact, after the 'roid-raging baddie tried to flatten the Bat by chucking compact car-sized slabs of concrete at him, the Dark Knight ordered the Batmobile to run the brute into the river. We're not sure what happened in the interim, but based on a brief hands-off demo of an *Arkham City* side-mission, it appears Bane and Bats have made up.

The source of their newfound alliance is Titan, the sanity-stealing, monster-making drug Joker manufactured in an effort to build an army of freaks in the first game. A fresh shipment is being hoarded by obsessive collector Penguin, who's hiding it all over the city. Batman wants to destroy it, but we're guessing Bane's motives aren't so noble. Still, the unlikely pair team up to find the body-morphing, mind-warping toxin, while taking out anyone mental enough to stand in their way. While story details are scant, we witnessed the two make short work of 20-plus Tyger guards within what appeared to be an arena-like prison setting. Following the fight, Batman poses Bane with the following question: "I've destroyed mine. I take it you've done the same?" The demo goes black before Bane responds, but we're guessing this friendship is doomed.

“Every aspect of the game is character-driven, that was absolutely critical to the design.”
–Dax Ginn, Rocksteady Studios

FLIGHT SCHOOL

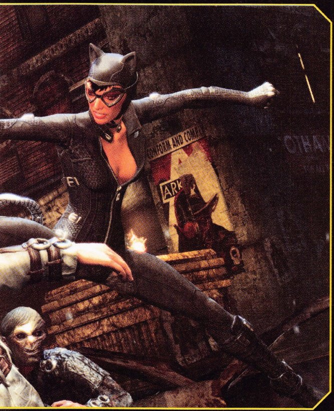
Soaring strategies for the novice flyer

While the extended glide and grapple-boost abilities are a Bat-hurtling blast, they're as intimidating as an Edward Nigma riddle for first-time flyers. It took us about 30 minutes to get comfortable with the easy-to-learn-hard-to-master moves, but the following tips should have players earning frequent-flyer miles in no time.

For an extended glide, pick a high point among the city's skyline, preferably a spot with some open ground below—a long, empty street will do the trick. From there, it's simply a matter of gliding off a building just as we would in *Arkham Asylum*: Hold X and walk off the edge; next, execute a dive-bomb by pulling R2; then, before hitting the ground, pull back on the Left-stick and release R2.

The grapple-boost, which propels Batman past his initial grapple point to a higher elevation, is even easier; just grapple with R1, then double-tap X (holding X on the second tap). That's it—now watch out for wayward pigeons and enjoy the view!

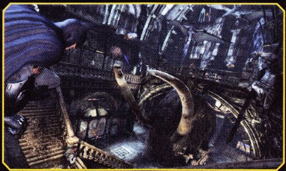
> **"We didn't set out to make the biggest open-world game ever made, just the most detailed open-world game ever made."**
>
> —Dax Ginn



The impressive rogue's gallery in *Arkham City* could easily fill out a few of hell's nine circles, but Rocksteady has instead opted to place the psychotic scumbags in a new prison facility. The game's subtitle refers to an extensive portion of Gotham that's been cordoned off as a make-shift penitentiary; five times larger than the last game's island loony bin, the open-world criminal compound is ripe with gameplay- and story-expanding opportunities. From supporting new navigation mechanics, to acting as a canvas for comic book call-outs, the city serves as the impetus for many of the sequel's fresh ideas.

We spent much our time in Arkham City introducing goons' jaws to the Dark Knight's knuckles, but some of our most rewarding moments actually engaged our eyes rather than the vigilante's rock-hard fists. Perched atop a gargoyle high above Gotham's gritty streets, it's hard not to be distracted by the detail-drenched world. While visually arresting series such as *Uncharted* have spoiled us into expecting current-gen visuals that eject our eyes from our heads, this sequel has the advantage of being set in one of pop culture's coolest universes. The slick lighting, shadowing, particle, and physics tricks might seem like old hat to anyone who's chased Drake around the globe, but the presence of series-specific landmarks should catch even the most jaded fans off-guard.

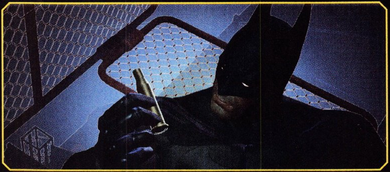
A CITY WITH CHARACTER

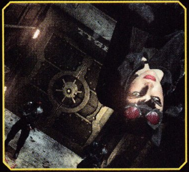


Of course, creating a world that's as rich and layered as any of Batman's fleshed-out foes was no accident. As we absorbed the nighttime atmosphere from the city's highest points, Ginn explained Rocksteady's ambitious goal of crafting a city that is, in and of itself, a fully realized character: "We wanted to pay tribute to the legendary landmarks from Batman's history and really fill out Arkham City with that Batman DNA wherever possible. Even though it's five times bigger than Arkham Island was, we feel it comes across to the player with the same attention to detail and love that went into *Arkham Asylum*. We didn't set out to make the biggest open-world game ever made, just the most detailed open-world game ever made." Ginn's point strikes us like a Batarang when we spy familiar sites like the Ace Chemicals building, Monarch Theater, and the Gotham Natural History Museum, all looking as though they've leapt right off a graphic novel's paneled page

Perhaps even cooler than taking in the more obvious scenery, though, is the reward that comes with discovering something off the beaten path. Urged by Warner Bros. Interactive producer Ernest Zamora to take a peek behind the Monarch Theater, we spy Crime Alley, the infamous site where a boyhood Bruce Wayne witnessed his parents' murders. As we pass over the crime scene's fading chalk outlines, the soundtrack cues a haunting, mood-setting score; as if that wasn't enough to put a dent in the Dark Knight's fragile psyche, an audio tape with a taunting message from Hugo Strange—the prison's new warden—surely messes with his mind. Anxious to uncover more secrets, we press Zamora for additional sightseeing tips. Unfortunately, he gets as cagey as a cornered super-villain, but Ginn does offer some teasing comfort: "Players who really dig deep into the DNA of *Arkham City* are going to find a lot, not only to explore, but rewards that will come as a result of that."

To our disappointment, Ginn swiftly crushed our hopes of tooling around this expansive world in the Batmobile, but we perked up when we learned we could fly; okay, maybe not in the sense of birds, planes, and Superman—but by smartly utilizing the title's new navigation tools, players can spread their figurative wings (i.e. the Bat's cape) like never before. Coupling his returning gliding ability with new dive-bombing and grapple-boosting moves, players are able to soar high above the thug-infested streets. In fact, once mastered (see sidebar), this skill-set can be leveraged to get Batman from one end of the city to the other, without ever getting his boots splashed by a back-alley puddle. An upgrade to *Arkham Asylum's* Line Launcher offers similar fast-travel benefits; while zipping across it, players can slow the camera, rotate it, then pick a new target to latch onto. The new maneuvers take some practice, but they're worth learning for those who wish to get around the city quickly and in true Bat-style. Besides, Batman's feet are meant to be planted in enemies' faces, not Gotham City's grimy pavement.





Players should plan on spending hours jumping around Gotham's gorgeous environments like a monkey in a codpiece. But when not ogling the sites—or wondering if the "Live Nudes" sign adorning the cityscape leads to a Catwoman lap-dance minigame—they can count on teaching metropolis' menaces some manners. As anyone who's spiked their DualShock in frustration after coming *this close* to breaking their *Arkham Asylum* combo-chain record can attest, littering Gotham's landscape with battered bodies is dangerously addictive. Thankfully, *Arkham City's* robust roster of super-villains comes with the various henchmen, goons, and thugs who worship at their ugly feet; from orange-jumpsuited psychos to Joker's face-painted followers, there's never any shortage of meat-bag inmates to be brutalized.

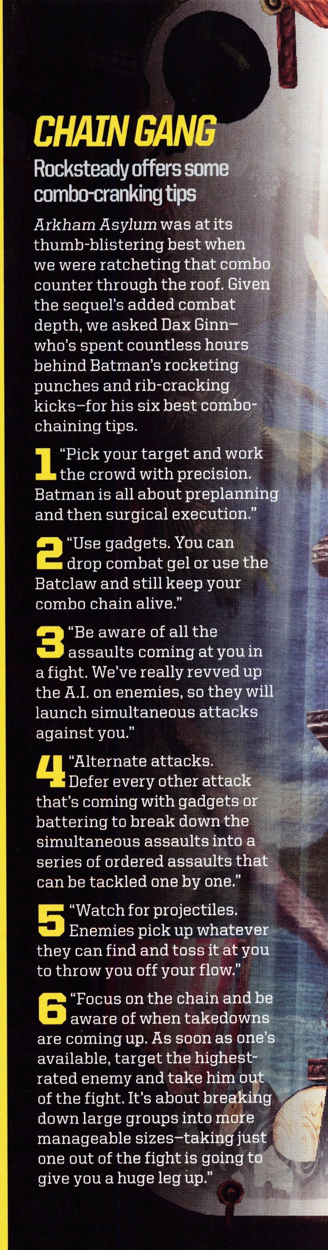
The game smartly retains the simple yet nuanced free-flow fight mechanics of its predecessor. Expertly stringing attacks, stuns, evasions, and counters still yields the sort of super-satisfying, momentum-building melees that even many dedicated fighting games can't match. And special throws, takedowns, Batarang zings, and Batclaw grapples can still be blended into the spine-crunching cocktail. But this wouldn't be a true sequel if the Dark Knight didn't come to the party with at least a few new flesh-pounding tricks tucked into his Batsuit. The appropriately named Beat-down sees him stunning enemies with his cape, then pummeling their faces into hamburger, while the more graceful Aerial Takedown has him tap-dancing on their heads. The ability to rob prisoners of their melee weapons to be used against them, also adds some extra bite—seriously, we really hadn't lived in the Bat's boots until we fed a muscle-bound freak his own sledgehammer.

BROKEN BONES

Contextual environmental knockouts—which might see a thug's face forcefully introduced to a concrete wall—as well as the ability to counter three attacks in quick succession, further up the ass-kicking ante. And those aforementioned navigational moves can also be brought into battle; adding an unsuspecting enemy into the dive-bomb or grapple-boost equation can only result in serious head trauma for the clueless mark. Other gadget-assisted combat moves include the ability to drop and detonate explosive gel in between Batman's fists and feet flurries, as well as a Batclaw takedown that forces enemies to French kiss the floor. Sporting more than twice the combat animations of its predecessor, *Arkham City* complements its dynamically choreographed, bone-splintering battles with stunning cinematic flair.

Just as these new Bat-attacks were making us feel badass, Ginn deflated our puffed-out chests by reminding us that the game's baddies come in greater numbers and with bigger brains. "We've really beefed up the number of thugs that Batman can take on at once—we're at 27, up from *Arkham Asylum's* 12. We've also put in optimizations within the characters, without sacrificing any of their additional functionality. In fact, we've given them more skill, more intelligence, and more coordinated capabilities." Uh, we're gonna need more Batarangs.

Let's not forget though that Batman is as famed for his stealth skills as he is for his femur-fracturing abilities. So while there's an incredible sense of accomplishment to be gained from clearing a room of nearly 30 rampaging crazies, skulking in the shadows also carries its obvious rewards. Whether delivering a glide kick to an oblivious chump's skull or stringing a patrolling guard to a gargoyle, there's often a more subtle way to eliminate a threat. The Caped Crusader's Detective mode also makes a return, allowing him to get the jump on baddies with the aid of X-ray–like vision. That said, the oft-exploited mechanic is better balanced in *Arkham City*, encouraging players to turn it off when it's not absolutely needed; helpful navigational cues won't be available when Detective mode is activated, and some enemies can even jam its signal. Still, it's invaluable when Bats is faced with a room full of gun-toting goons.



CHAIN GANG

Rockstead y offers some combo-cranking tips

Arkham Asylum was at its thumb-blistering best when we were ratcheting that combo counter through the roof. Given the sequel's added combat depth, we asked Dax Ginn—who's spent countless hours behind Batman's rocketing punches and rib-cracking kicks—for his six best combo-chaining tips.

1 "Pick your target and work the crowd with precision. Batman is all about preplanning and then surgical execution."

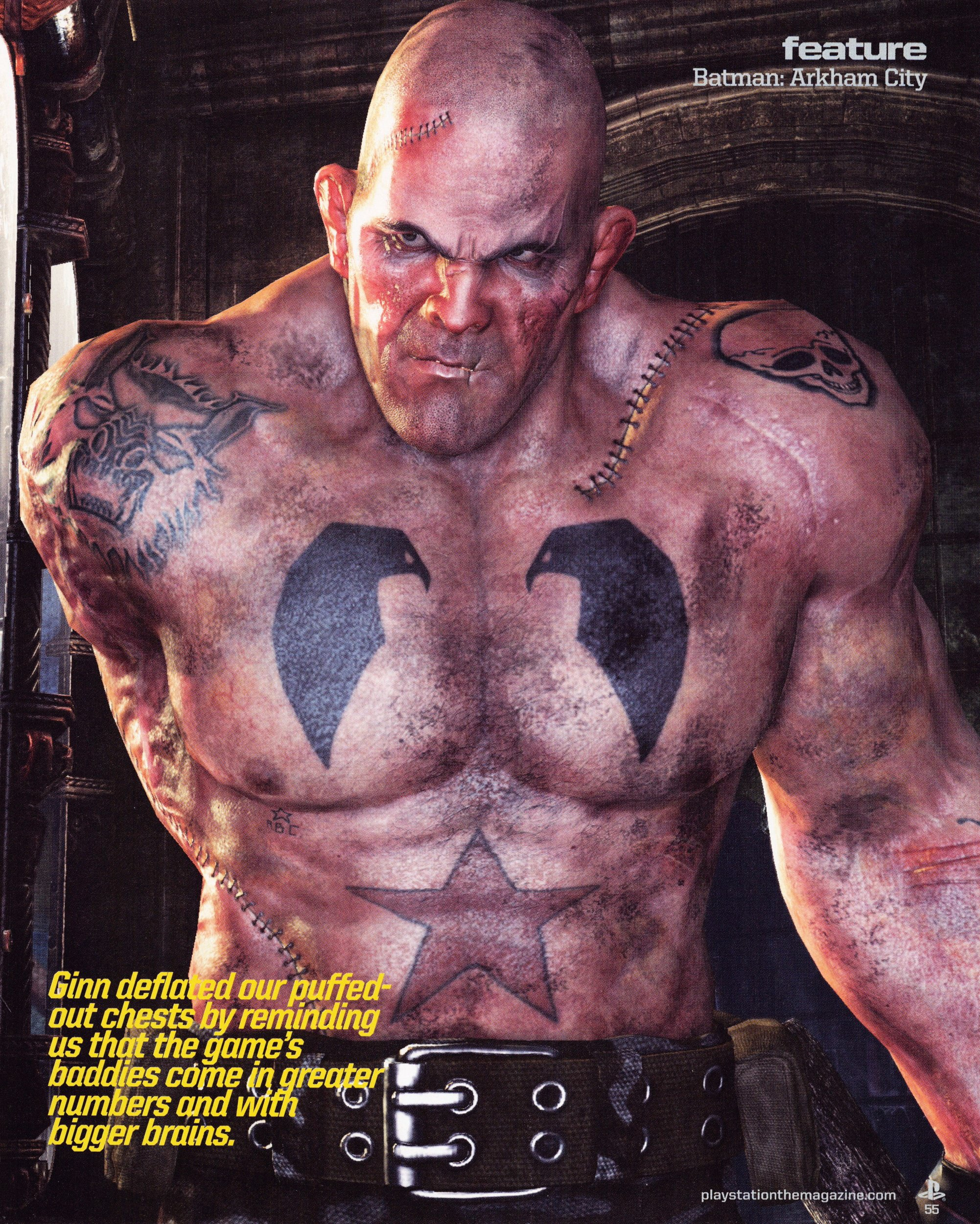
2 "Use gadgets. You can drop combat gel or use the Batclaw and still keep your combo chain alive."

3 "Be aware of all the assaults coming at you in a fight. We've really revved up the A.I. on enemies, so they will launch simultaneous attacks against you."

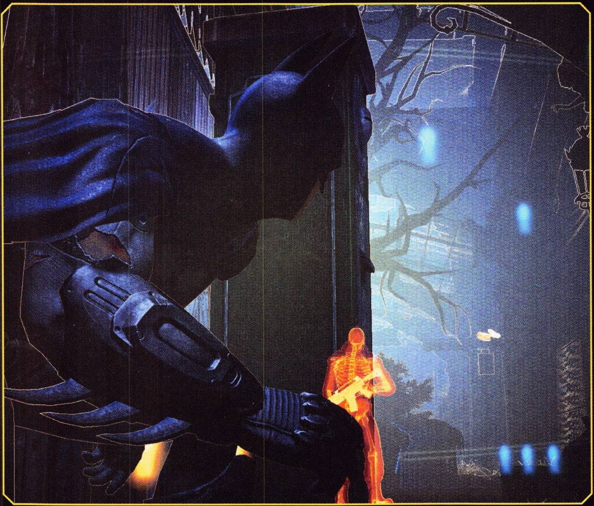
4 "Alternate attacks. Defer every other attack that's coming with gadgets or battering to break down the simultaneous assaults into a series of ordered assaults that can be tackled one by one."

5 "Watch for projectiles. Enemies pick up whatever they can find and toss it at you to throw you off your flow."

6 "Focus on the chain and be aware of when takedowns are coming up. As soon as one's available, target the highest-rated enemy and take him out of the fight. It's about breaking down large groups into more manageable sizes—taking just one out of the fight is going to give you a huge leg up."



Ginn deflated our puffed-out chests by reminding us that the game's baddies come in greater numbers and with bigger brains.



The larger world and lethal lineup of creeps have thus far represented *Arkham City's* buzz-iest bullet points. Anyone who's followed the game, even moderately, can probably run down the roster of headlining anti-heroes, while expressing enthusiasm over the opportunity to face them in an environment far larger than the first game's. But between the lines of the marketing-spun hype lies more than just a bigger playground populated by badder villains. Sure, the blockbuster additions rightfully deserve attention, but it's the smaller stuff that stuck with us long after our lengthy demo concluded.

At this point, any fan who hasn't heard specifics about Catwoman's inclusion as a playable character should probably think about moving out from under that Crime Alley dumpster they call home. That said, even the dude who proudly wears a Bat symbol-emblazoned T-shirt to his comic-book club could be forgiven for not knowing that Batman can now execute a slick slide maneuver; further complementing the focus on navigating the city with ease, players can send the cape-and-cowled hero beneath vehicles and other low-lying objects. It's a minor addition, and one that's seemingly not as cool as, say, picking pockets as Selina Kyle's catnip-craving alter ego. But it's an attention-to-detail touch that fans will execute over and over simply to witness the awesome acrobatic animation. We learned the move while attempting to snag a Riddler trophy from under a car, but continued triggering it even after we possessed the green prize. While this reflects only a tiny example of *Arkham City's* small wonders, it's representative of a continually evolving trend throughout the game.

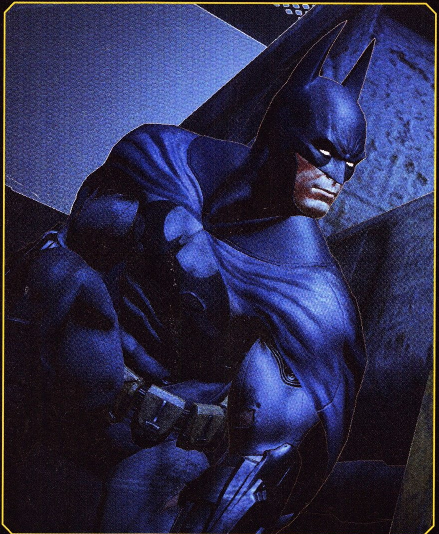
IN THE DETAILS

While something as simple as a slick new move got us cracking a smile beneath our cowl, it might be something else entirely that gets other fans excited under their suit. For some, it'll be the appearances by lesser villains like Calendar Man and Victor Zsasz that sell them on the experience's authenticity, while others will pick up a DualShock solely to seek out anti-heroine Talia al Ghul. Heck, we wouldn't be surprised if the most obsessive fans lose a few hours trying to track down an obscure reference to Black Canary that's reportedly been hidden within the game.

And while *Arkham City's* demented denizens have dominated the press coverage, Batman's few faithful allies have barely emerged to reveal the extent of their roles. We can guarantee Oracle and Alfred will deliver sage strategic advice through Batman's earpiece, but how exactly will Commissioner Gordon, Quincy Sharp, and Jack Ryder factor into the fiction? Lets not forget Bruce Wayne's Batcave full of hot rides, either; two fan-favorite moments from *Arkham Asylum* included appearances by the Batmobile and Batwing. Ginn swiftly evaded our vehicle-related queries, but admitted rather cryptically—and tellingly—that those types of nods were an important part of *Arkham Asylum's* success.

While Ginn dodged many of our questions as if they were remote-controlled Batarangs, he opened up like an aggressively interrogated informant when it came to stressing the gameplay freedom afforded by *Arkham City's* open design: "It allows players to make decisions any way they want; if they choose to do all of the side missions first, then start the main story, that's an option we leave open. They can decide how they divide up the experience—we didn't lock-out any options for the player at any point." Piggybacking on this point, Zimora reveals the extent of the game's open-ended nature. "Arkham City is huge...anything you can see, that's external, is open to the player as soon as they hit Start. Additionally, there are a number of internal locations that open up as players progress."

Regardless of whether we follow Penguin's murderous path, kill a few hours jumping through Riddler's hoops, or just treat Batman like a sightseeing tourist in his own town, we can't wait to get back in the Batsuit. From the big and small, to the subtle and shocking, *Arkham City's* packed with potential, crammed with fan-pleasing content, and full of game-of-the-year promise. If it can even come close to matching the Bat-tastic time we had with *Arkham Asylum*, we'll be as happy as a plot-hatching Joker when the knight falls this October.

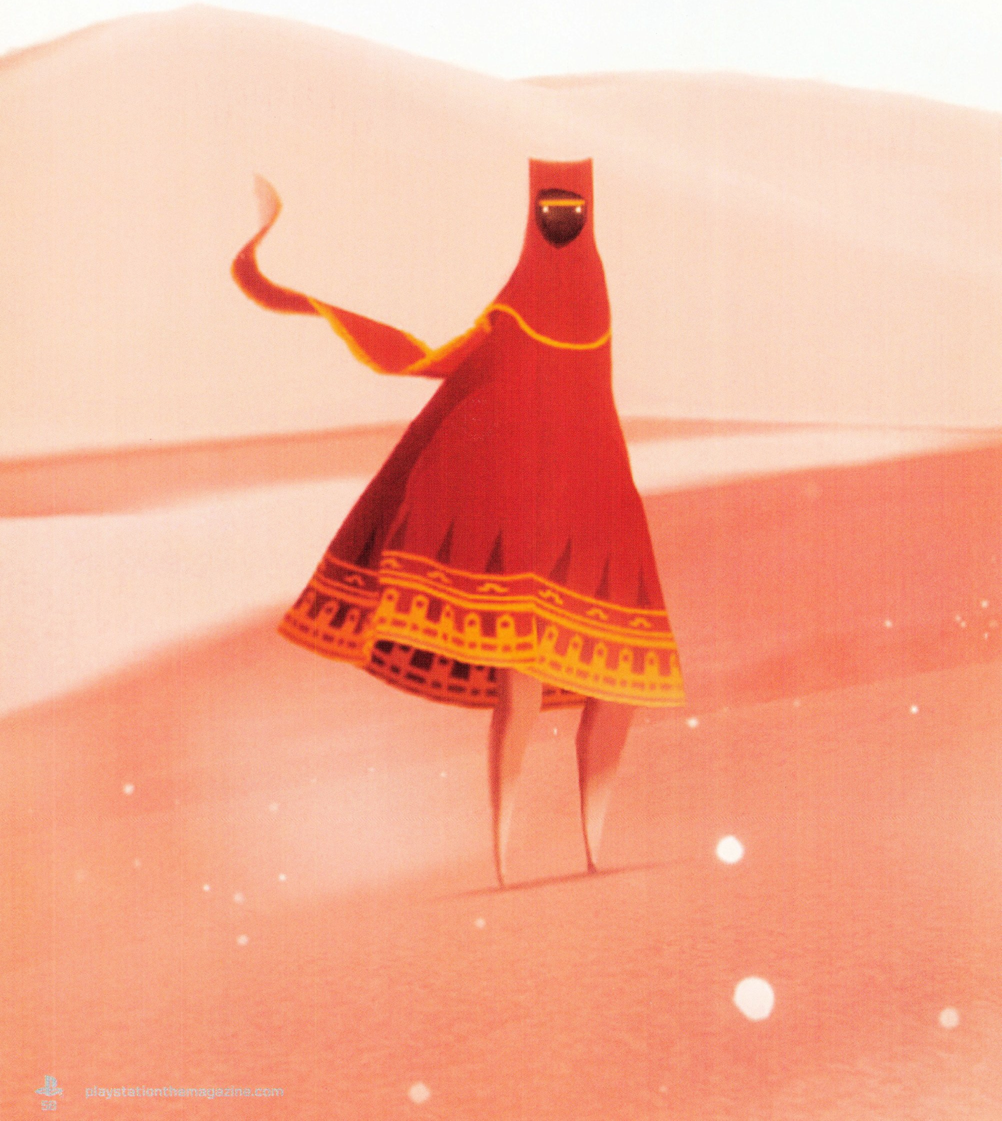


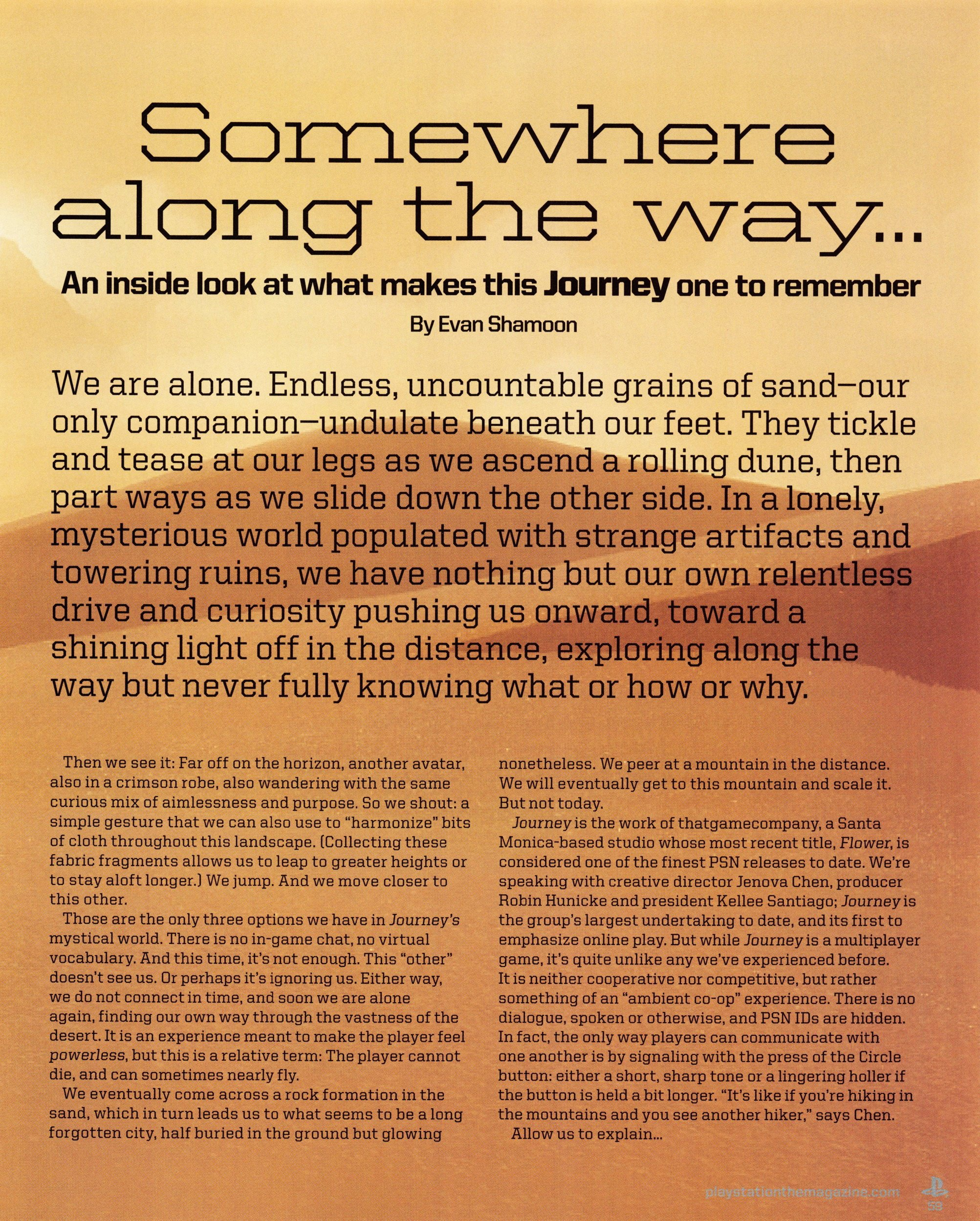
TOYS TOYS TOYS!

Teach an old gadget new tricks

Unlike so many sequels that lamely justify robbing us of all the cool powers and upgrades we earned in a preceding game, all the core gadgets that were collected by *Arkham Asylum's* conclusion are available from the get-go. Additionally, a number of aforementioned enhancements allow Batman to complement his combat, detective, and navigation skills in brand-new ways. Especially cool is an upgrade to the Cryptographic Sequencer that allows an eavesdropping Bat to hack into radio messages. Having more control over Remote Batarangs isn't too shabby an upgrade either.

While we appreciate the augmented abilities to Batman's existing arsenal, the greedy gamer in us can't help but wonder what new toys he's been crafting in the Batcave. Rocksteady has only confirmed smoke pellets—which obviously add an extra layer of strategy to stealth play—but Zimora teased the introduction of other toys as well. "Batman never sleeps... he's always looking for better ways to fight crime." Hmm... a baddie-crisping Bat-taser would look great on our belts.





Somewhere along the way...

An inside look at what makes this **Journey** one to remember

By Evan Shamoon

We are alone. Endless, uncountable grains of sand—our only companion—undulate beneath our feet. They tickle and tease at our legs as we ascend a rolling dune, then part ways as we slide down the other side. In a lonely, mysterious world populated with strange artifacts and towering ruins, we have nothing but our own relentless drive and curiosity pushing us onward, toward a shining light off in the distance, exploring along the way but never fully knowing what or how or why.

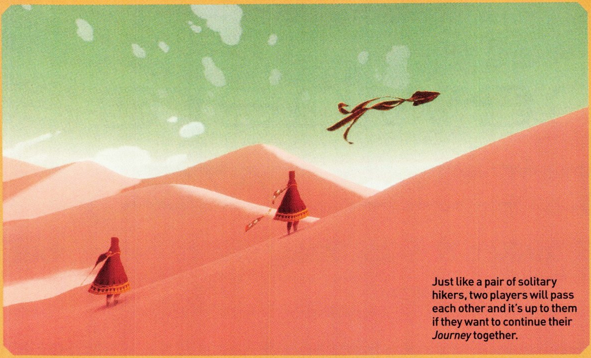
Then we see it: Far off on the horizon, another avatar, also in a crimson robe, also wandering with the same curious mix of aimlessness and purpose. So we shout: a simple gesture that we can also use to "harmonize" bits of cloth throughout this landscape. (Collecting these fabric fragments allows us to leap to greater heights or to stay aloft longer.) We jump. And we move closer to this other.

Those are the only three options we have in *Journey's* mystical world. There is no in-game chat, no virtual vocabulary. And this time, it's not enough. This "other" doesn't see us. Or perhaps it's ignoring us. Either way, we do not connect in time, and soon we are alone again, finding our own way through the vastness of the desert. It is an experience meant to make the player feel *powerless*, but this is a relative term: The player cannot die, and can sometimes nearly fly.

We eventually come across a rock formation in the sand, which in turn leads us to what seems to be a long forgotten city, half buried in the ground but glowing nonetheless. We peer at a mountain in the distance. We will eventually get to this mountain and scale it. But not today.

Journey is the work of thatgamecompany, a Santa Monica-based studio whose most recent title, *Flower*, is considered one of the finest PSN releases to date. We're speaking with creative director Jenova Chen, producer Robin Hunicke and president Kellee Santiago; *Journey* is the group's largest undertaking to date, and its first to emphasize online play. But while *Journey* is a multiplayer game, it's quite unlike any we've experienced before. It is neither cooperative nor competitive, but rather something of an "ambient co-op" experience. There is no dialogue, spoken or otherwise, and PSN IDs are hidden. In fact, the only way players can communicate with one another is by signaling with the press of the Circle button: either a short, sharp tone or a lingering holler if the button is held a bit longer. "It's like if you're hiking in the mountains and you see another hiker," says Chen.

Allow us to explain...



Just like a pair of solitary hikers, two players will pass each other and it's up to them if they want to continue their *Journey* together.

Enter the Sandbox

On second thought, allow Chen: "*Journey* is a game that's kind of hard to describe, particularly because it's not a single-player game; it involves online and you can't play it single-player unless you're not online."

"The single-player experience and the online multiplayer experience will be mixed together," adds Chen. "It's not a co-op game because of the possibility that you could be alone at any time, so players will still be able to finish the game by themselves. Players can play competitively, but it's not a competitive game. The game doesn't have lobby or friend invites; doesn't provide the name tags of players, but what we believe is that they are not important; they are not necessary, and we want to keep the player interaction happening in a design that belongs to the game rather than something outside the game."

In many ways, *Journey* is a game about sand: Its aesthetic, its vastness, its physicality. The simple act of running up and down dunes is addictive and compelling; the harried trudge up and the fluid slide down are oddly reminiscent of titles like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *SSX* (though clearly without the "xtreme"). This simple act is repeated to infinity, and getting it right was essential for the game's success. "I feel like a lot of the downward motion, the feeling of surfing and gliding through the sand, came from feedback that we saw in playtests where people were really enjoying the motion of the sand, but wanted more momentum," says Hunicke. "So we had a long conversation about what it would really feel like." The conversation included a field trip up the California coast to the Pismo Dunes, which proved hugely inspirational to the team.

The result is a game that's as pleasing to the senses as any in recent memory. Running and gliding through the desert in search of mysteries, answers, or nothing at all is an experience unto itself. The way the sand

> "Regardless of whether you are a kid or a veteran player, you can enjoy the game in your own way at your own pace. Nobody is going to force you to play the game any other way."
>
> *–Jenova Chen*

cascades underneath the player's feet is elegant and incredibly well realized, and the way its endless gradients subtly lighten and darken over stretches of land is equally so. Austin Wintory, who created the soundtrack for *flOw*, reprises his role for *Journey* with a live recorded score, giving the experience a more organic, analog quality as rhythms churn high above and far below. Like *Flower* before it, *Journey* stimulates the mind in ways most videogames do not.

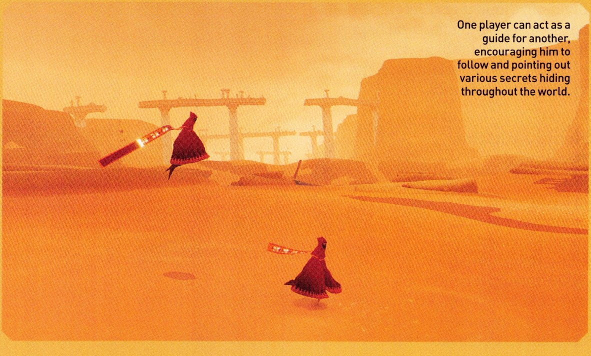
Now Get Lost

Thatgamecompany's previous titles, *flOw* and *Flower*, were exercises in abstraction. And while *Journey* is certainly no *Heavy Rain*, it's a fairly significant step in the direction of the literal: The player is an anthropomorphized being moving through a world and doing...stuff. But how to engage players in a compelling narrative with characters who don't speak? "It continues to be one of the key questions around the development of the game, because this is a game with more of a story," says Santiago. "We kind of say that if *Flower* was a poem, then *Journey's* more of a parable. But in that way, we also want to keep it open to interpretation, and thereby keep it hopefully relevant to a wider gaming audience." Specific story elements, for example, are revealed through abstract etchings in stone.

Indeed, "accessibility" has consistently been one of the studio's core values, and Santiago believes this extends to all areas of the experience. "We're not just talking about the controls, but also the content—making games that have content that's accessible and relevant to a wide variety of people. And part of that is trying to keep it open ended, and keep that story open to interpretation so that the player can bring themselves to it and find their own meaning in it."

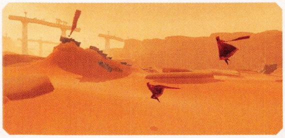
In a similar manner, the team is constantly pressed to keep a tight enough hold on the experience to prevent it from becoming overwhelming. "One of the comments we hear is that our games have a lot of big, open, vast-feeling worlds in them, but you don't feel lost when you're in them," says Hunicke. "That takes a lot of design work. That's a lot of what the team spends time on: Where will players be in their emotional state? Where will they be in terms of thinking through this problem? Where will they be in terms of just their familiarity with the controls? We feed all that back in to make the world feel big, but not overwhelming."

Interestingly, Chen cites the seemingly antithetical *Grand Theft Auto* games as an inspiration. "It's the flow," he says. "Regardless of whether you are a kid or a veteran player, you can enjoy the game in your own way at your own pace. Nobody is going to force you to play the game any other way, and it allows more people to be able to enjoy the game."



One player can act as a guide for another, encouraging him to follow and pointing out various secrets hiding throughout the world.

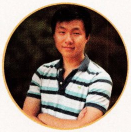
thatgamestaff



Kellee Santiago, Co-Founder and President

After receiving her BFA in Theatre from New York University, Santiago went on to earn her MFA in Interactive Media from the University of Southern California. It was at USC that she met co-founder Jenova Chen, and eventually came together to form tgc. She speaks around the world at various conferences, including TED, which in 2010 made her a TEDFellow.

Jenova Chen, Co-Founder and Creative Director



Born and raised in Shanghai, China, Chen moved to the U.S. after university, where he earned a master's degree from the University of Southern California's Interactive Media Division. *Cloud* and *flOw* were both student projects, and began his quest to provide new kinds of emotional experiences in the videogame medium.

Robin Hunicke, Producer

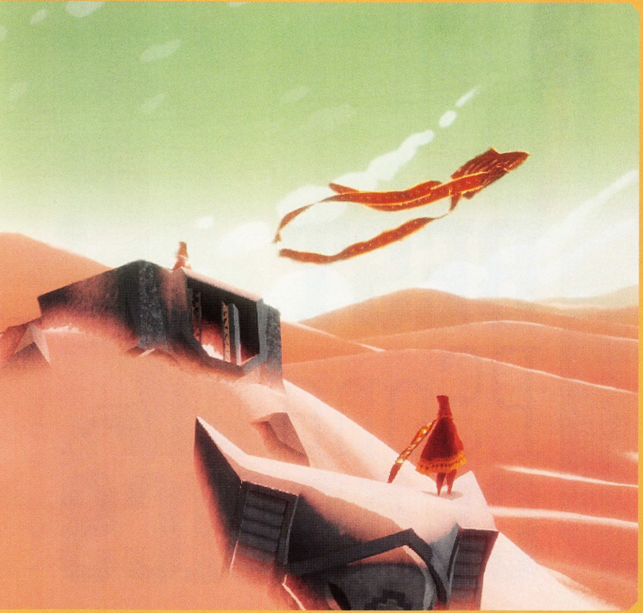
With a background in design and computer science, Hunicke joined thatgamecompany in 2009, having recently come off a stint at Electronic Arts for the *MySims* franchise and Steven Spielberg's *Boom Blox* titles.

Sometimes the simple joy of sightseeing with a total stranger at our side is enough.

Outside the Lines

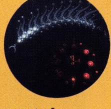
Much of the team's effort has gone toward providing a unique experience, and part of this means detaching players from certain familiarities and muscle memory instincts, while still maintaining a level of universal accessibility. "I think there's a lot of work done to try to manage and reset expectations," says Santiago. "For instance, a small way you can see this in *Journey* is the character has no arms. Because if he has arms, you have expectations of what he should be able to do with those arms." In *Journey*, however, a player can't pick up anything, handle any tools, or climb ledges. "There are a lot of large and tiny decisions made throughout the experience to try to manage those expectations and put the player in a different mind space."

Controls have been given similarly thorough consideration. Even seemingly fundamental schemes, like using the Right-analog stick to manipulate the in-game camera, have been abandoned. Instead, *Journey's* camera is controlled with the DualShock's Sixaxis motion controls. "Putting control for the camera on the stick is something a traditional gamer would expect," says Hunicke of the decision. "But after awhile it takes you into this other place, and that feeling that the



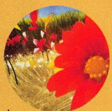
thatgamegames

flOw (PS3/PSP, 2007)



A game in which the player controls an aquatic microorganism that evolves by consuming other microorganisms. Jenova Chen initially based *flOw's* design on psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theoretical concept of mental immersion, or "flow." Begun as a school project and originally released as a free Flash game in 2006, *flOw* eventually came to PS3 and PSP to much acclaim (along with remastered graphics and a new multiplayer mode). The PS3 release was the most downloaded game on PSN in 2007, and won the Best Downloadable Game award at the 2008 Game Developers Choice awards.

Flower (PS3, 2009)



Something of an interactive "poem," *Flower* puts players in control of the wind, blowing a flower petal through the air using the motion of the DualShock. Flying close to flowers causes their petals to follow, and often brings color to previously arid fields. The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences selected it as 2009's Casual Game of the Year.

> "There are a lot of large and tiny decisions made throughout the experience to try to manage those expectations and put the player in a different mind space." –*Kellee Santiago*

controls themselves transport the user into a different mind space—not what they expect—is something we talk about a lot on the development team."

Where most titles place their emphasis on the enemy, *Journey* brings a fresh perspective. "In your traditional multiplayer game, a lot of the game is focusing on execution of 'the power,'" says Chen. "You usually gain powers and execute them. In a zombie game, you kill zombies. Even though there's multiplayer, the actual percentage of your attention that you spend on the other player is very little. In *Journey*, we try to do the opposite: we want to use atmosphere and world and character design to make you want to pay more attention to each other."

Fabric of Our Lives

Perhaps the player's most important relationship in *Journey*, however, is with cloth. Our mysterious avatars are made of cloth, in fact, and as we approach sheets of it littered throughout the gameworld, we "harmonize" with it, allowing us to jump, glide, and in some cases fly across the environment. It's the closest *Journey* comes to a power-up; unlike most games' devotion to "loot," here the key word is "borrow."

"In the most gamey term, it's a resource that you're using, but we wanted to put the player into a different space," says Santiago. "We kind of talked about putting power aside—this idea of using resources is part of the power paradigm in a lot of games. You don't absorb [cloth pieces] or anything like that, but they make your scarf brighter, which can then allow you to fly. But they're just touching you and then they continue to exist in the world. You're not taking anything or using anything per se."

"Respect" is another word commonly thrown around in studio meetings. "We wanted you to feel like you respected the things in the world, and that they had a mutual relationship with you—that it wasn't a 'using' relationship," says Hunicke. "You can borrow them, but you can't keep them. If Kellee and I were playing together, maybe she would get to them faster than me, and then I would feel a sudden sense of loss, like, 'She had my stuff!' We found a lot of that in the game, even simple things like gameplay, the idea that someone could steal your gameplay—those are the kinds of things that we really have to constantly work on as a team to mitigate."

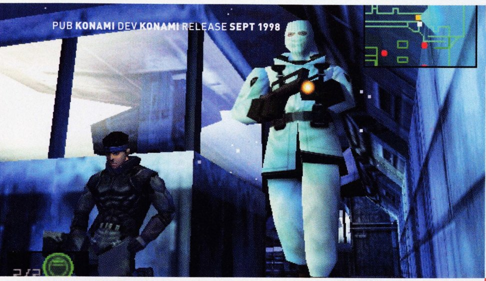
Thatgamecompany's quest for the "emotional connection" between user and gameworld remains at the forefront of its collective mind, and the group is as determined as ever to achieve its goals. At the beginning of the project, Chen, according to Santiago, "literally mapped out the emotional curve" of *Journey*, marking the positive and negative beats he wanted players to experience, and then choosing words that captured the feeling of each area.

"Many years from now, you may go back to *Journey* and there may not be anyone left playing it," says Hunicke. "It may just be you—for many days at a time, there might be only one traveler. So we had to think about the reality of this experience, this space and time and the way players would experience it—it needs to feel like a great place to visit. It needs to feel like a living place."

10 BEST PSone CLASSICS

It's never too late to enjoy a classic. Whether we're reliving nostalgic memories or experiencing these gems for the first time, we know one thing for certain: great gameplay doesn't go out of style. Here are the 10 quintessential picks for the best PSone games of yesteryear, all available for download from PlayStation Network.

By Lucas Sullivan



PUB **KONAMI** DEV **KONAMI** RELEASE **SEPT 1998**

1 METAL GEAR SOLID

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? The stealth genre was nothing before Solid Snake hit the scene. With its tense espionage, thrilling firefights, and stirring orchestral score, playing *MGS* made us feel like we were starring in our own action flick.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? This may be *the* best PSone game of all time. Way ahead of its competitors in both scope and subject matter, it set the foundation for one of the PlayStation's most iconic series.

CLOSE CALL *MGS's* designer and creator Hideo Kojima had intended to develop the third *Metal Gear* game for the failed 3DO console. We thank our lucky stars every night that Kojima chose *MGS* to grace the PSone instead.

2 CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

PUB **UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE** DEV **NAUGHTY DOG** RELEASE **OCT 1998**

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? After honing their craft with the first two *Crash* games, Naughty Dog went all out for *Warped*. Vibrant graphics, infectious music, and tight controls made Crash's time trek a blast to play, though the brutal difficulty drove us crazy.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? One of the first 3D platformers to perfect the art of stage variety, Crash's third outing is still his best. We loved bazooka-ing futuristic baddies in one level, then riding a tiger on China's Great Wall in the next.

BE PREPARED Think this game is just kiddy fare? Think again. Between the secret stages, speed-run relics, and hidden gems, we spent hours striving for mastery.

TURBO
33
RICO

PUB **SCEA** DEV **SINGLETRAC** RELEASE **OCT 1996**

3 SUIKODEN

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? *Suikoden* found the perfect median between 16- and 32-bit RPGs, blending impeccable sprite graphics with a 3D landscape during battles. On top of the charming aesthetic, the story took a grand scale, pitting father against son as they commanded massive armies.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? We much prefer paying $6 for an outstanding RPG that had previously cost $300 or more on sites like eBay. The old asking price illustrates how closely RPG fans hold *Suikoden* in their hearts, and playing it now will be like exploring glorious uncharted terrain for many.

POSSE We agree with *Suidoken's* philosophy: there's power in numbers. With over 100 playable characters to recruit to our side, the game gives completists a lot of material and incentive to play on.

PUB **KONAMI** DEV **KONAMI** RELEASE **DEC 1996**

Shadow
Shadow
Shadow
Shadow
Pahn 399/399
385/385
Viktor 472/472
Attack
Defend
Rune

4 TWISTED METAL 2

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? The success of this game single-handedly established the car combat genre's prominence. Vehicular mayhem is at its best when we're destroying the Eiffel Tower with an ice cream truck driven by a psychopathic clown.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? We could argue that this is still David Jaffe's best work (you know, *God of War's* creator). The fine-tuned balance and bizarre cast keep us coming back for more, and demolishing a buddy's ride in multiplayer is just as fun now as it was in 1996. With the upcoming reboot, there's no better time to experience the series' roots.

PARABLES *TM2* took great pride in its depraved mythos, and half of the fun of completing the game is seeing what each lunatic driver uses their one wish for.

5 FINAL FANTASY IX

Garnet
"I wish to be kidnapped...
right away."

PUB **SQUARE** DEV **SQUARE** RELEASE **NOV 2000**

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? This was *Final Fantasy's* PSone swan song and Square pushed the console to its limits in every regard. With a whopping four discs of content, there was so much depth to this game that it boggled our minds, and we *still* don't feel like we've seen everything it has to offer.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? Everybody knows Cloud Strife's story, but the tale of lovable thief Zidane feels much more tender and heartfelt. The game's graphical style and battle systems harken back to *FF's* earlier games, and it really takes us back to days we spent questing on NES and SNES.

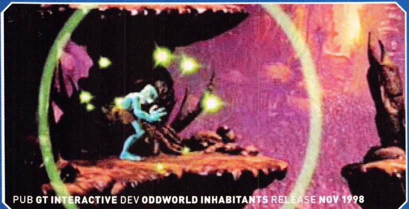
HEART OF THE CARDS *FFIX* introduced a surprisingly deep card game, Tetra Master, which had enough strategy and collectability to warrant its own standalone game years later.

6 ODDWORLD: ABE'S EXODDUS

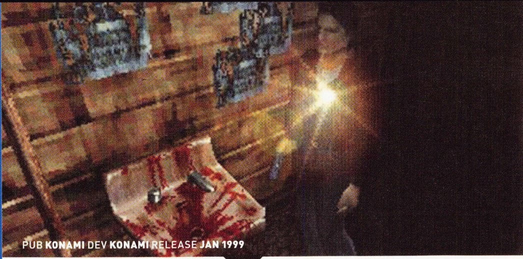
WHAT MADE IT GREAT? This gorgeous puzzle-platformer once again put us in Abe's loincloth, on a quest to save our fellow Mudokans from slavery, before a corrupt race turns their tears into soda. Our only weapons: telepathic meditation, and excellent communication skills.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? *Exoddus* deftly walked the line between being forgiving with save-anywhere gameplay and crushing our souls with its mind-melting puzzles. But it's all worth it to save our indentured pals, or kill an unsightly Slig with a lethal, telekinetic fart.

SOUND GARDEN The graphics grabbed our attention, but we stayed for the superlative sound design. Hearing Abe's cheerful "Hi!" always made us smile, and few things are as gut wrenching as the sound of a blind Mudokan being mulched by a saw blade.



PUB **GT INTERACTIVE** DEV **ODDWORLD INHABITANTS** RELEASE **NOV 1998**



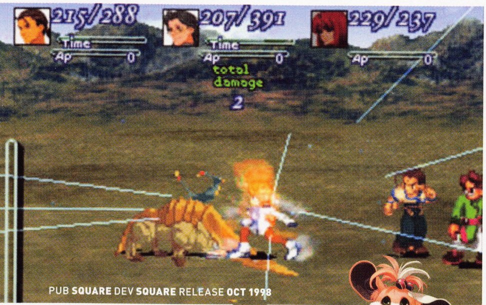
PUB **KONAMI** DEV **KONAMI** RELEASE **JAN 1999**

7 SILENT HILL

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? In lieu of zombie killing, *Silent Hill* took survival horror to new psychological depths. Between the mind-bending plot and repulsive enemy monsters, we'll admit to playing some segments with all the lights on.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? It defies conventional logic, but *SH* convinced us: sometimes, low-resolution graphics are scarier than modern-day fare. When draw-distances are miniscule and any freakish creature could pop out from the darkness, our imaginations can't help but wander into terrifyingly grotesque territory.

SPOILER ALERT? The *Silent Hill* series is known for its multiple endings, and the original installment had no less than five. Of note was the goofy "UFO" ending, where protagonist Harry was inexplicably abducted by aliens.



PUB **SQUARE** DEV **SQUARE** RELEASE **OCT 1998**

9 SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? When it comes to PSone platformers, three's the magic number. Spyro's third adventure was a rare breed: the collect-'em-all platformer that actually compelled us to snag every last trinket. In addition to the franchise's solid gameplay, *Dragon* achieved what we thought impossible: platformer minigames that weren't utterly tedious.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? We consider this the peak of the purple dragon's career, with all subsequent sequels trying to recapture this game's jovial genius. After playing *Dragon*, it's no wonder Insomniac knew what they were doing when they made *Ratchet & Clank*.

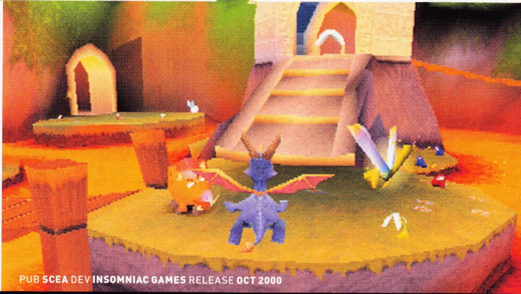
TIMELY *Year of the Dragon* isn't just a pun—2000 belonged to the dragon on the traditional Chinese zodiac.

8 XENOGEARS

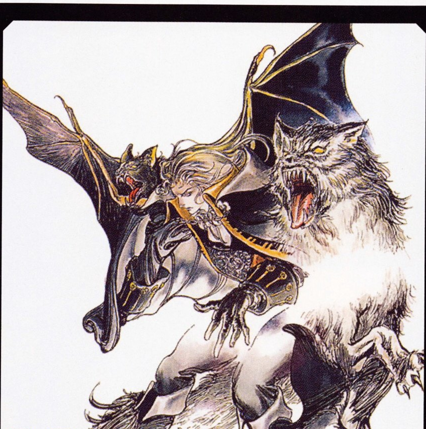
WHAT MADE IT GREAT? We love us some anime-style mech battles, and *Xenogears* delivers. The profound story tackles concepts like religion, *deus ex machina*, and split personalities, and the two-tiered combat (on foot or in a mech) had flashy effects and intense skirmishes galore.

WHY PLAY IT NOW? This may not be Square's flagship franchise, but every PlayStation fan needs to play this game at some point. It may be a little heavy on dialogue, but roleplaying in epic storylines doesn't get much better than this.

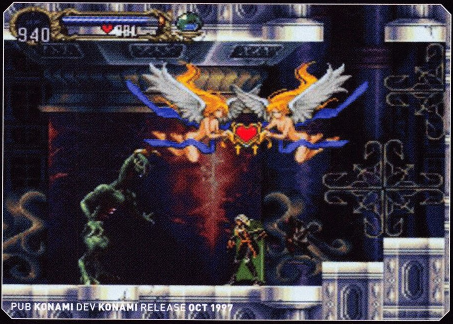
EMOTIONAL *Xenogears'* soundtrack really resonates with RPG diehards; we'd be surprised if some of these tracks wouldn't bring a tear to the hardcore fan's eye.



PUB **SCEA** DEV **INSOMNIAC GAMES** RELEASE **OCT 2000**



10 CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT



PUB **KONAMI** DEV **KONAMI** RELEASE **OCT 1997**

WHAT MADE IT GREAT? The story of Dracula's son Alucard marked a turning point for the beloved *Castlevania* series. With a massive, non-linear layout, superb sprite work, and RPG elements like collectible items and earned abilities, this is one of the most captivating sidescrollers of all time.

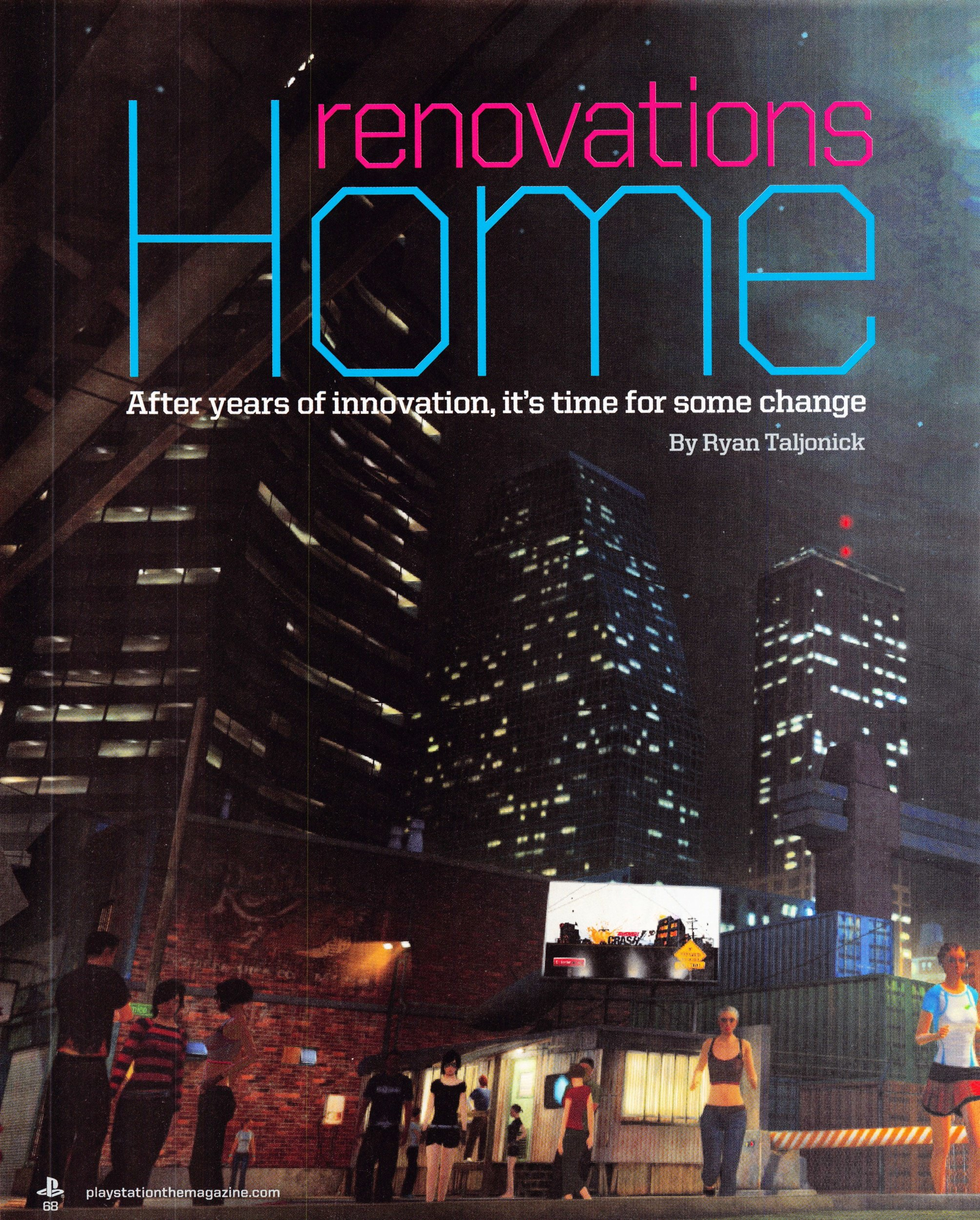
WHY PLAY IT NOW? *Symphony* has aged beautifully, thanks to its open-ended gameplay and carefully scaled difficulty curve. We love the Belmont clan, but Alucard's quest takes the *Castlevania* cake.

TOPSY-TURVY Reaching the true ending meant achieving 200.6 percent completion. Once the "final" boss was defeated, the entire castle flipped upside-down, refilled with beefed-up enemies, to be cleared all over again.

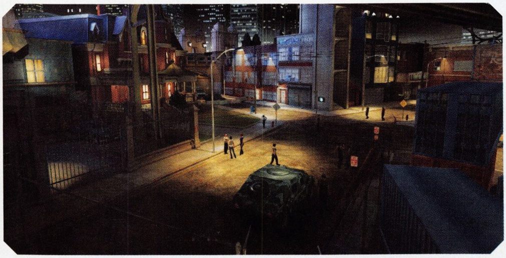
Home renovations

After years of innovation, it's time for some change

By Ryan Taljonick



Let's face it—PlayStation Home has a perception problem. "There's nothing to do there," naysayers allege. "It's a barren virtual wasteland." But the Home of 2008 is nothing like the Home of today. Since the platform's inception more than 230 games (most of which are free to play) have been added to the service, and more than 22 million users have logged in worldwide—but that's not enough. Jack Buser, Home's director, tells us his team has big plans for some serious renovations. The next step? A complete redesign of Home's 3D layout, making the service (and its game content) more accessible than ever. But before we can delve into what the service is to become, we must first look at how it all began.



Building Home

It started with a simple concept: Community. The idea was to build a place for gamers to come together outside the realm of any specific game—a place for us to share experiences and meet new people. This massive undertaking was unlike anything Sony had done before. For the project to succeed, Buser knew PS3 owners would need to feel at home in this new, virtual world. Thus, PlayStation Home was born.

"We wanted to build a place where gamers could come together and talk to each other and hang out and talk about their favorite games," says Buser, explaining that Home was initially built as a 3D, game-centric social networking service. Ideally, users would create an avatar, make new friends, and play games together in the future.

"I think that worked to a certain extent, but to a limited extent," says Buser. "You just didn't see those social bonds explode in those early days. Frankly—and we learned this early on—you've got to give folks something to do to break the ice." Soon, Home was populated with game-themed videos, lounges, and lobbies. The development team implemented many different features in hopes of getting users to communicate with one another, but these attempts were met with limited success. Finally, something clicked. Gamers like to play games. This revelation (which Buser says, in hindsight, was painfully obvious) became Home's strategic pillar for growth: Bring games to the platform.

"So we became just laser-focused on the idea of building games inside of Home as that 'killer app' that would cause folks to form social bonds—and it worked like a charm," says Buser. "The minute we started rolling out these games, as fast as we could, we started to see all of our key performance indicators just start shooting through the roof, whether it be traffic or revenue—I mean, all of a sudden we saw massive growth on the platform, and we continue to see that growth to this day. Why? Games."

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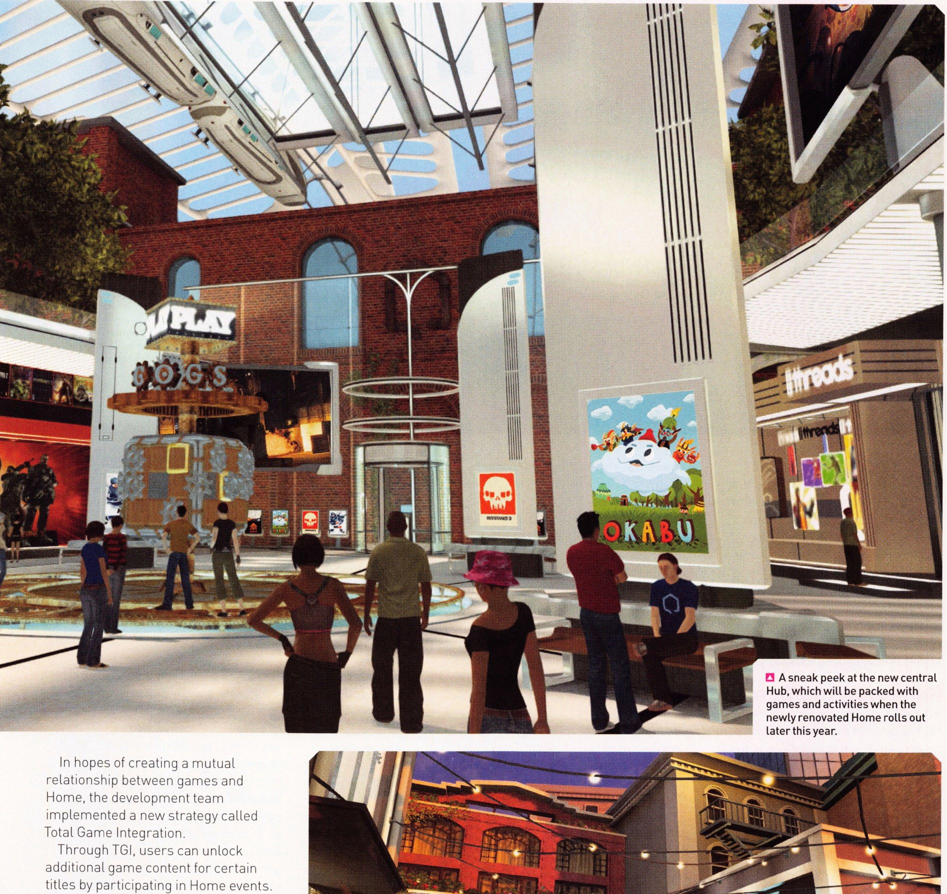
"The minute we started rolling out these games...all of our key performance indicators just start shooting through the roof."

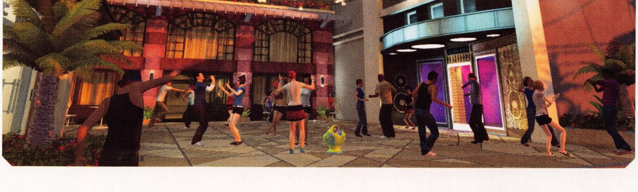


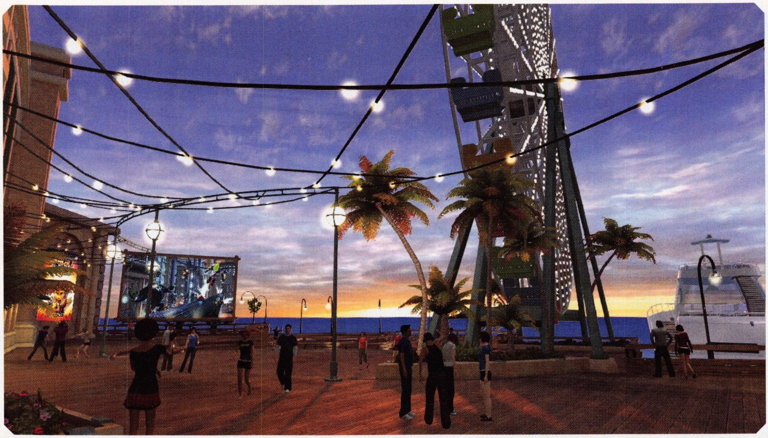
▲ A sneak peek at the new central Hub, which will be packed with games and activities when the newly renovated Home rolls out later this year.

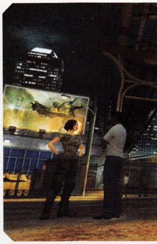
In hopes of creating a mutual relationship between games and Home, the development team implemented a new strategy called Total Game Integration.

Through TGI, users can unlock additional game content for certain titles by participating in Home events. For example, users could obtain Unlock Points for *Killzone 3's* multiplayer by participating in a minigame within Home. Conversely, Home content can be obtained by playing certain titles—playing *Red Dead Redemption* unlocks cowboy gear for our avatar.

However, despite all the great games that now reside within Home, one thing







The Action district is the place to be for shooter fans and combat aficionados. A rough 'hood? Perhaps. But darn fun for those who can hang.

hasn't changed since the project's launch—its accessibility. "Today, when you log into Home, you'll see the Central Plaza, which was designed to be a neutral hangout spot," says Buser. "As a new user, you come in to Home and you're standing around in the Central Plaza, and one of the first things people always say—you see this time and time again—is 'what do I do, and where's all the stuff?'" This is where Home's redesign comes into play.

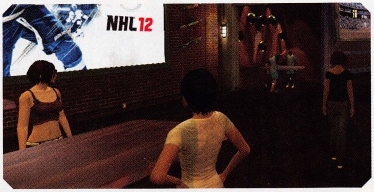
Renovation station

"We're designing a new core experience for PlayStation Home that will *scream* games—that will guide users to the actual game content so that there is no confusion as to where the games are or how to get to them," says Buser, smiling with excitement. "So for us, this is one of the biggest—if not *the* biggest—things we've ever done on the platform."

So what does this mean, exactly? The Home developers studied theme park design to aid them with Home's new layout. A central Hub will act as a virtual "home page," branching off into themed districts based on game genres. Sports Walk features everything sports related. From games, trivia, and even live stat tickers, there's plenty of content for the sports nuts among us. Next up is Play Pier, the "fun for everyone" area. Fans of games such as *LittleBigPlanet* and *Ratchet & Clank* will feel particularly comfortable in this section. The Action district can be described as a...rough... neighborhood, filled with military vehicles and an ominous tension that reflects the action-filled games it houses. Finally, the Adventure district will suit those looking for *Uncharted* or RPG-style games.

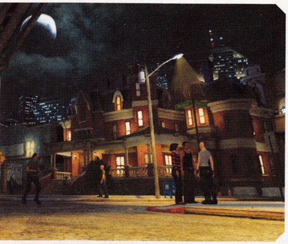
Game-themed rooms already existing within Home's framework will be connected to their appropriate district once the redesign hits, and the current 2D navigation menu will remain intact for users already accustomed to its format. Jim Wallace, Home's senior producer, says quick travel will be easy within the service's 3D layout via teleporters, and the service will retain its appeal as a virtual hangout spot. "We know people love to hang out in Home, so each one of our spaces has an area where you can get your cabbage patch on, or whatever you want to do," he says.

> "We've spent years building out this world filled with hundreds of games, and now the final piece is going to come in."



Sports fans can meet up in a sports bar to play games, watch live events, and challenge themselves with trivia competitions.

In the middle of the central Hub (and each of its branching districts) exists a kiosk, which will feature new games on a rotating time cycle. As we load into our Home demo, we're pleased to see *Cogs* (a puzzle game from Lazy 8 Studios) showcased on the central terminal. Additionally, games can be found all over the Hub area, making it easy for us to jump right into content. By featuring more games up front and center, Home can help independent game developers obtain more exposure for their titles. "That's really, I think in many ways, reinforcing our commitment to the independent game development scene," says Buser. He explains *Sodium*, an IP from developer Outso, obtained 1.6 million players within the first six weeks of its Home launch. "To get those kinds of numbers from an unknown IP and an unknown publisher, it's unheard of—but that's something Home is just really good at."



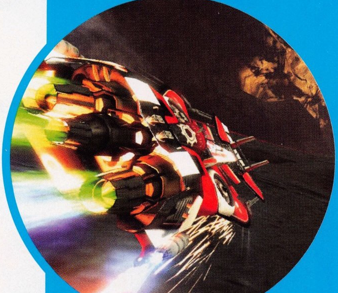
Also new to Home is a questing system and activity board, which will familiarize us with the redesign and turn the platform into a game itself. Within a few minutes of exploring the Hub, a siren sounds in the distance and a newsflash pops up on a nearby terminal: Aliens are taking over Home. We approach the activity board and are presented with a quest to help defend against the alien mothership. We head out to the nearby pier, board a boat, and play a minigame in which we must collect floating crates of ammo dropped by a previously destroyed cargo ship. Afterward, we use the ammo to play a turret-based game wherein we shoot down alien fighters before taking on the mothership itself.

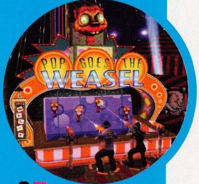
"We can build things that are very, very robust—not unlike an RPG-type experience. That's how powerful this technology is," says Buser. Referencing the alien quest we just finished, he tells us the new Home will have the capability to remember the quests we've completed, which will determine events, rewards, and quests we have access to in the future.

"We've spent years building out this world filled with hundreds of games, and now the final piece is going to come in. The first impression you'll have as you come into Home is, 'Whoa, there's a ton of stuff to do here,' which is very different than the impression you get today, which is 'Whoa, where's all the stuff?'" admits Buser. "You've got to understand, Home is different from what gamers are used to. I understand if people tried it before, but it's different—it's totally different. It's constantly changing and growing and evolving. We are doing things in PlayStation Home that point toward the future of this entire industry."

Coming Home

Home has changed a lot since its launch nearly three years ago—don't be a stranger! Log in, do some exploring, and be sure to check out these great games.



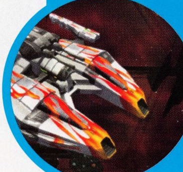


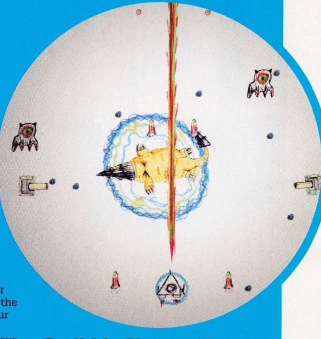
The Midway 2

A virtual carnival of sorts (and an annex to the Midway complex), *The Midway 2* includes an additional 10 games (for a total of 20 between both *Midway* titles) and 100 new prizes. Simply purchase a Golden Ticket and try your hand at a variety of silly, fun minigames, such as *Kitty Cannon* and *Teed Off*.

Sodium 2: Project Velocity

This futuristic racing game lets us go head-to-head with other players in an upgradable jet at break-neck speeds. With more than 2.7 million collective races completed so far, *Sodium 2* is a popular Home attraction.



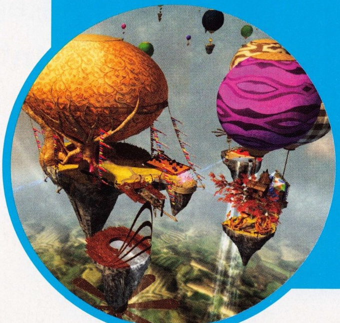


Novus Prime: Escalation

This fully functional multi-player space combat shooter has us defending Earth from the evil Bot armada. Destroying our opponents nets us experience points, and we can customize our ship with powerful weapons and add-ons while obtaining space-themed avatar gear.

Scribble Shooter

A top-down arcade-style shooter, *Scribble Shooter* separates itself from the competition with its artistic presentation. Everything in the game is hand drawn by a 12-year-old, resulting in a unique and addictive game with plenty of unlockable rewards. The full game can be purchased as an arcade cabinet that can be placed in our Home personal space.



Aurora

This mysterious cluster of floating islands houses all sorts of fun games requiring us to defend the floating archipelago from foreign invaders. Participating in games such as *OrbRunner* or *Aurora Defence* nets us experience points as we level up and unlock special rewards for our personal space and avatar.

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PlayStation® The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

It may be hard to believe, but game reviewers are fans just like the rest of us. They have their pet franchises, niche interests, and inexplicable favorites just like any person with a longtime passion for gaming. And like everyone else, they're vulnerable to high expectations, to an unspoken desire for a particular product to fulfill all their wildest gaming fantasies.

The challenge for the reviewer, then, is this: Where to draw the line? Is it fair for personal expectations to color a review or determine the score?

Certainly there is no such thing as an "objective" review. A review is by its very nature a personal opinion about a product. It's the definition of subjective! At the same time, however, a reviewer has to understand that the wider gaming audience may not share his particular predilections.

We at PTOM do our best to offer reviews that are helpful buying advice above all else. Informing our readers always takes precedence, so we strive to judge games by what they *are* rather than what they are not.

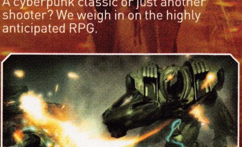
If we really do our jobs, our reviews will simply help you make up your mind for yourself.

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

A cyberpunk classic or just another shooter? We weigh in on the highly anticipated RPG.

LIMBO

Though we were disappointed to learn that this game is not about limboing, its beautiful black-and-white visuals and brilliant puzzles won us over.



SECTION 8: PREJUDICE

This downloadable shooter boasts everything but the kitchen sink, from auto-turrets to a drop pod-based respawn system. So, seriously, don't hold its lack of sinks against it.

How we score our reviews...

10	**Awesome**	Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.
9	**Excellent**	Highly recommended and a great investment.
8	**Great**	Wonderful yet still possesses minor flaws.
7	**Good**	Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.
6	**Acceptable**	A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.
5	**Mediocre**	A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.
4	**Flawed**	Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.
3	**Poor**	A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.
2	**Awful**	A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.
1	**Raw Sewage**	Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation

Our Highest Accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.

Deus Ex Human Revolution

Transhumanist, but not transcendent

Staring out over the darkened streets of Detroit, we don't like what we see: Fear-mongering politicians exploit the ignorance of the common man, inciting hateful protests that turn to violent riots, engulfing entire city blocks. Opportunistic gangsters snatch mechanically augmented people right off the street, stripping them of their hardware before reselling it on the black market. Thousands of innocents languish in poverty and addiction—bankrupted by a medication that prevents their frail bodies from rejecting their mechanical enhancements—as corporate giants continue to profit from their suffering.

And here we sit, high above the turmoil in our lavish corporate apartment, a servant of the companies whose technology catalyzed all this dramatic social change. Slowly we're consumed with self-hatred and regret at the thought of our own augmentations, installed without our consent as a life-saving measure following a devastating attack on our company's headquarters—an attack that left an entire research team dead.

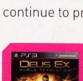
Worst of all, we know that once we walk out the front door, the city we actually experience will in no way resemble the view from our apartment. No, really: the static backdrop that players can admire from protagonist Adam Jensen's window is complete fiction; the actual level is confined, claustrophobic, and oddly unlike a real city. This strange disconnect is, in many ways, emblematic of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

Revolution positions itself as a western RPG—with it's dialogue trees, inventory management, optional side missions, and experience-based upgrade system—but in this regard, it comes up short, not only when compared to genre heavyweights like *Fallout 3* and *Mass Effect* but also when measured against its own potential. While the game is still extremely strong overall (especially when considered simply as a well-rounded shooter), it's not quite the ambitious, triple-A contender it set out to be, and in that, we're slightly let down. But expectations aside, what remains is a deep, varied, multifaceted experience filled with solid combat.

Mind and Body

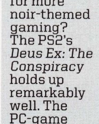
Revolution is not the prettiest game. It is not the most technically impressive, nor the most action-packed. But hell, *Fallout 3* wasn't much of a looker

▸▸



Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Square Enix
Dev Eidos Montreal
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like William Gibson made a game, but didn't quite nail it.



Want More?

Looking for more noir-themed gaming? The PS2's *Deus Ex: The Conspiracy* holds up remarkably well. The PC-game port worked around the console's limitations and delivers a compelling experience.

Missions occur in Singapore and Montreal, but we never left the identical-looking buildings.

either, and who needs another *Call of Duty*? That's not why we play games like *Revolution*, a gritty, noir-themed detective tale about conspiracy, betrayal, and widespread social unrest. Games like *Revolution* are all about atmosphere and immersion… which is why it's troubling when these aspects of *Revolution* don't satisfy as well as they should.

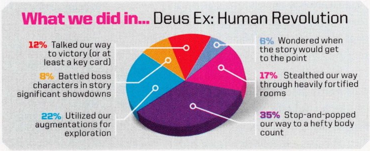
The game does an amazing job of raising genuinely interesting points about technology and the ways in which human augmentation would affect people's everyday lives—like prostitutes being forced to augment themselves to remain attractive or people being jumped and stripped of their parts like a car. It's all really powerful, intriguing stuff, but *Revolution's* fundamental flaw is that it tells without showing.

A hooker in distress describes how her brutal pimp constantly pressures her to augment herself to attract more customers, but we never see her suffering firsthand so her story loses impact. We hear about anti-augmentation riots after the fact—but were we ever standing next to a crowd as it's nailed with tear gas and begins to panic? Did we see a man beaten by the cops as his protest sign slowly smolders in the flaming wreckage of an overturned car? Sadly, no. So despite the fact that the game covers an exciting and unfamiliar subject matter, we had a hard time feeling invested in the world.

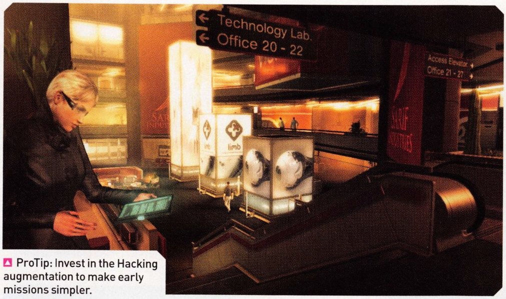
Subtle details add richness to the world, like an opera billboard that's later referenced in an email.

Certain choices aren't so obvious. We can choose to fight or sneak away unharmed, but our decisions do have consequences later.

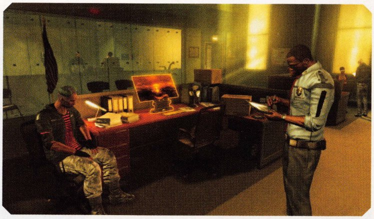
What we did in… Deus Ex: Human Revolution



The narrative also provided a bittersweet mix of stellar ideas and vague disappointment. The dialogue-tree-based conversations that actually had an impact on the story were all extremely well executed. Having to confront our former S.W.A.T. partner about our shared traumatic history not only moved us, but also provided a tricky and clever conversation to navigate, so it felt doubly rewarding when we eventually convinced him to help us. Unfortunately, there were only a handful of these meaningful, puzzle-like interactions. The rest of the



ProTip: Invest in the Hacking augmentation to make early missions simpler.



The silent takedowns always felt slick.

dialogue often felt like filler in comparison—well-written filler that helped progress the narrative or more fully develop a character, but filler nonetheless.

Similarly, there really weren't many big, game-changing choices to be made as far as the story was concerned. And when those moments did arrive, the stakes were substantially lower than the gut-wrenching, life-and-death decisions we were forced to make in games like *Mass Effect*. For example, at one point during the main storyline, a sleazy side character that aided in the attack that nearly killed Jensen asks for a weapon so he can defend himself from a mercenary group that's just stormed his building. We would've happily let the SOB die, but we decided to give him a pistol just to see what would happen. Turns out all we got were a brief exchange over the radio and a handful of cash later in the mission.

Cold Hard Steel

Still, despite the fact that we wanted higher stakes and more conversations, these engaging mechanics certainly helped to flesh out the experience and served as a perfect complement to the game's unexpected star: the action. The straightforward, cover-based shooting mechanics just plain work. The snap-to cover system feels completely natural, automatically aiming down site when we pop up from behind an object and allowing us to seamlessly maneuver between obstacles without exposing ourselves to enemy fire (which is nice since Jensen's health is clearly not designed for run-and-gun gameplay). Visceral bullet impact, powerful sound effects, and an interesting assortment of upgradeable weapons make wasting a room full of bad guys feel especially rewarding.

The game also does a good job of breaking up the action with a handful of unique combat situations, but the equally well-implemented stealth mechanics proved to be a far better remedy for the usual shooter monotony. By moving slowly and avoiding our enemies' line of sight or simply exploring until we found a convenient vent or hack-able door, we were able to avoid some potentially overwhelming situations. Plus, the silent takedowns and palpable tension always felt incredibly slick, especially since enemy A.I. rises above the usual level of "sentient tackling dummy."

And of course, Jensen's unlockable augmentations (read: special abilities) were an empowering and addictive addition to the action. Being able to drop down and stun enemies from any height, Batman-style, or turning completely invisible and silently approaching a guard for a stealth kill always thrilled us. Though being forced to manage to the obligatory power meter was obnoxious, we never had a problem earning experience quickly and unlocking new powers just as fast.

So, is *Revolution* on par with the likes of *Fallout 3*? Did it fulfill the triple-A expectations it so successfully managed to cultivate? Not really, no. Unlike the augmented human beings of the *Deus Ex* world, *Revolution* isn't more than the sum of its parts. But is it an engaging game worthy of our time and money? Absolutely. Despite some shortcomings, *Revolution* is still a superior game that's more robust and ambitious than the vast majority of modern shooters.

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The Official Magazine
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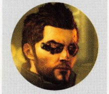
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

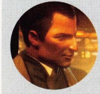
Cast List

THE SECURITY SPECIALIST



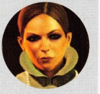
Adam Jensen
After losing his arms, legs, and ex-girlfriend, Jensen needs answers.

THE FLAWED MENTOR



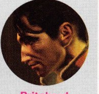
David Sarif
CEO of a biotech corporation and Jensen's boss, Sarif believes firmly in the march of progress.

THE INNOCENT VICTIM

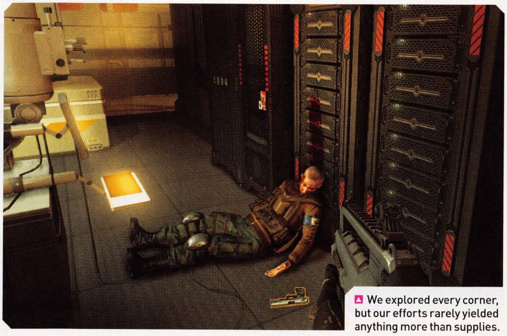


Megan Reed
A scientist and Jensen's ex, she's killed before her research is unveiled.

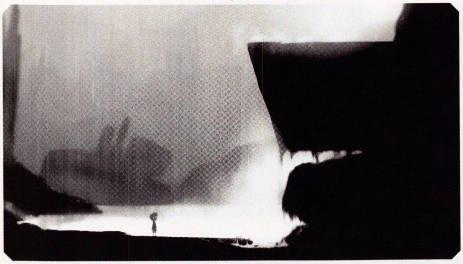
THE KNOW-IT-ALL

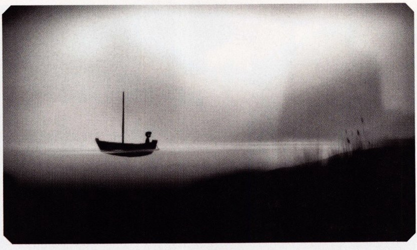


Pritchard
Sarif's go-to computer guy and Jensen's annoying in-ear partner.

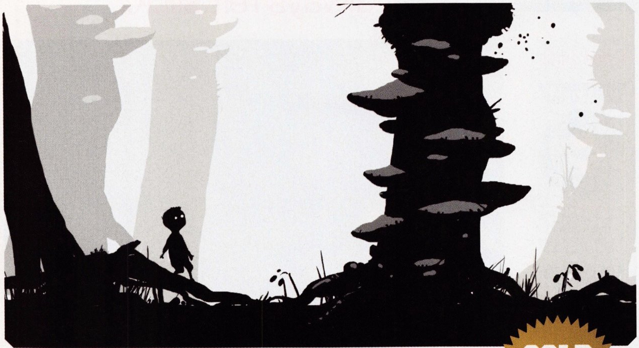


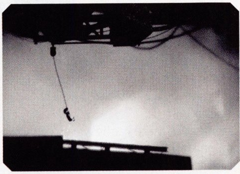
We explored every corner, but our efforts rarely yielded anything more than supplies.





No, our screenshots aren't broken—this is actually how *Limbo* looks in action. The minimal black-and-white aesthetic is moody and captivating.





***Limbo* only utilizes two buttons (one for jumping, the other for grabbing), but it manages to use them in dozens of unique, creative ways.**

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Limbo

Reaching out from across the divide

Info

Format PSN
Pub Playdead
Dev Playdead
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like a fun, moody game interpretation of *1000 Ways to Die*.

Chased by a massive spider, a young boy dashes across a desolate landscape, jumping and climbing over the remains of what seems to be a society devastated and abandoned long ago. He swings across a chasm on a rope. He pushes a crate to an advantageous climbing position. He rolls a stone to knock down a tree, creating a bridge. Still, the spider follows him. Suddenly, it catches him and impales him on its sharp, spear-like legs. Not fast enough, young friend.

The boy is stuck in *Limbo*, a world presented in stark black and white. All he knows is that he's on a journey to find his missing sister and that this world is much more dangerous than it appears at first glance. The boy will die dozens of times during his journey, but that's all right. *Limbo* is designed as a trial-and-error puzzle game where failure results in any number of brutal deaths. Mess up the timing of a jump? Expect to drown. Don't pull a switch in time? Decapitation. Fortunately, checkpoints are plentiful, so even with the ridiculous amount of death that the game throws at us, it never feels frustrating. The boy simply gets back up, ready to give it another shot.

Limbo's remarkable ability to never repeat a puzzle mechanic makes the experience intensely engrossing. Whether it's locating the path across a river in the game's opening forest or finding a way past the moving gears in the industrial latter half, each concept feels new and refreshing. Yet, at the same time, each puzzle also manages to feel intuitive. For some, this intuitiveness could potentially be perceived as mere simplicity, but it's really a testament to *Limbo's* design. It doesn't need to provide a tutorial for us to figure out its two button controls (X jumps, Circle grabs), and utilizing those simple commands to figure out complex puzzles is immensely rewarding.

The appealing gamplay is coupled with the most beautiful and chilling aesthetic we've witnessed in a long time. The black-and-white world flickers like an old film, while the minimal score highlights the ambient noises made by the various inhabitants of *Limbo*. Every environment the boy comes across is just as gorgeously disturbing as the last, right up to and including the expertly executed finale.

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Limbo is simply one of the most impressive titles that PSN has to offer, and at $15, it's an experience that no gamer should pass up. TAYLOR COCKE

Call of Juarez
The Cartel

A (drug) bust

Abandoning the 1800s for a more modern take on the Old West could have made for a rip-roaring good time, but instead, this generational leap forward was a step back for the *Call of Juarez* series. Chasing a Mexican drug cartel through the streets of Los Angeles is boring at best, with outdated graphics and gameplay that feel a generation old. The shooting is sloppy and unfulfilling, and despite regular segments that call upon us to dash between cover, there's no actual cover system to speak of. Instead, there are clumsy first-person fighting sequences and a number of forgettable driving sections stretched throughout 12 to 15 hours of lackluster action. Oh, and there's a bunch of unnecessary cursing and gratuitous nudity, too.

Though neither pretty nor particularly fun, *The Cartel* might still be worth plodding through with two friends willing to jump in for some cooperative gameplay. Playing as DEA agent Eddie Guerra (the stereotypical sleazy cop), FBI sniper Kim Evans (the hot chick), or LAPD officer Ben McCall (the crotchety descendant of the original games' McCall brothers) offers up slightly different experiences, with each character receiving different information throughout the story. McCall, for instance, gets a phone call early on with incriminating information about Guerra, and though he receives this call while all three characters are together, the others only hear McCall's side of the conversation. The other characters are given similar tips throughout, adding some creative complexity to the game's interesting narrative.

▲ Clever narrative devices are absolutely wasted on *Cartel*'s uninspired action.

PS3
CALL OF JUAREZ
THE CARTEL
M

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Ubisoft
Dev Techland **Price** $59.99
ESRB Mature **It's like** the guy who wears a cowboy hat and thinks he's Billy the Kid.

Each character also has his own motive and objectives that can be completed out of view of his teammates for additional points. It's a nice addition, but it's surrounded by too much technical and gameplay inadequacy to elevate the overall experience. It also doesn't really work in single-player, where the A.I. partners don't even bother trying to complete their objectives, instead spending their time shouting helpful phrases like, "If it wasn't for us, you'd be dead, ese!" while running into a wall. It's a shame, too, because the interesting co-op elements might have been enough to make a mediocre game really good. Instead, they just make an otherwise terrible game nearly passable. Nearly. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **5**

▲ It's a shame we can't judge a game by its wardrobe.

No More Heroes
Heroes' Paradise

The garden of madness?

Info

PS3
NO MORE HEROES
M
KONAMI

Format PS3
Pub Konami
Dev feelplus / Grasshopper Manufacture
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the bloodiest soap opera ever.

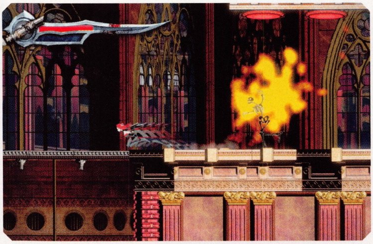
When pervy *otaku* Travis Touchdown discovers he's low on cash, he decides to try his hand at killing people and soon finds himself competing against 10 pros to become the world's number one assassin. A mediocre plot ensues, though the game takes a sharp turn into the land of soap opera twists during the last half-hour for no apparent reason.

Along the way, *No More Heroes* provides plenty of goofy, over-the-top hack-'n'-slash action but manages to avoid distinction by mixing its creative and entertaining bosses with mind-numbingly repetitive side jobs. Between buying new equipment and gathering enough cash to enter the next ranked match, it's almost guaranteed we'll be completing timed killing sprees and catching kittens (yes, for real) until our eyes bleed.

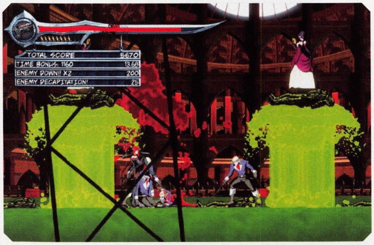
Move controls add minor improvements to the combat, but poor driving mechanics and the embarrassment of waggling a controller to power up Travis' Beam Katana cancel out any real enjoyment provided by the interface.

Heroes is a fine title taken in small bites, but the repetitive gameplay becomes ever more grinding with prolonged exposure. **ANNE LEWIS**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **6**



The combat is slick and deadly. Unfortunately, so are the moving platforms. Good thing vampires are basically immortal, right?



BloodRayne Betrayal

A bloody average time

Info
Format PSN **Pub** Majesco Ent. **Dev** WayForward **Price** $14.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** watching *Interview with a Vampire* and *Twilight* back to back.

After poisoning her enemy with a quick bite on the neck, the sexy vampire dashes away, clenches her fist, and sets off a chain reaction that sends gibs and guts flying. Her movements are fluid and frictionless, and after slashing apart the final enemy, she leaps toward the platforms to her right where the same frictionless motion that made her so deadly in combat causes her to slip right off the other side, falling to her death. Reload at the checkpoint.

BloodRayne: Betrayal is an exercise in duality. Despite being an absolute treat to look at—with stellar 2D visuals and hand-drawn graphics—the enemy variety is less than impressive and their design is, well, uninspired. While the combat is engaging and challenging, the platforming feels difficult for the sake of being difficult. Though it starts off rewarding, it builds toward nightmarish. Beyond the level design, it's the controls—which are better suited for dicing apart enemies than accurately jumping between objects—that cause bouts of cursing.

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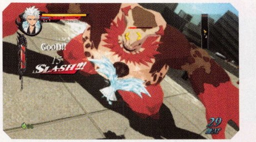
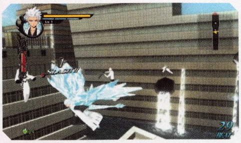
Those looking for a challenge will definitely find some bloody enjoyment in *Betrayal*, but the easily frustrated may be left seeing red. **HOLLANDER COOPER**





Don't be fooled—this is a *Dynasty Warriors* knock-off through and through.

Bleach Soul Resurreccion

Exactly whose soul are we resurrecting?

If imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery, *Dynasty Warriors'* should feel downright honored by *Bleach: Soul Resurreccion*. Expect to repeatedly buttonmash through waves of identical enemies, only this time it's lost souls instead of Yellow Turbans.

There's little that could be considered new here aside from the faster-paced combat, though even that is handcuffed by painfully linear missions. The bulk of the campaign consists of grinding through characters' massive level-up grids, and while Mission mode ups the challenge by enforcing limitations such as time or skill restraints, the 20-odd missions' repeated environments and enemies quickly become bland.

Those looking for a helpful overview of *Bleach's* story will also be disappointed. The Story mode is short and the exposition thin, mostly delivered by narrated text at the beginning of missions—no animated cutscenes here. At least fans of the anime will love playing as their favorite characters; the game's not deficient, just generic.

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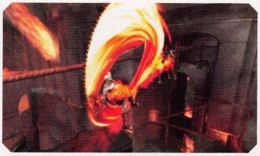
For anyone who doesn't own *Bleach*-licensed bed sheets, though, there's not much of note here. **KIMBERLEY WALLACE**

Info

PS3
BLEACH
SOUL RESURRECCION
T

Format PS3
Pub NIS America
Dev SCE
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like *Dynasty Warriors* for anime fans—a very specific subsection of anime fans.



Some of the battles are jaw-droppingly epic despite their small-screen, portable origins.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

God of War
Origins Collection

Breaking the small-screen chains that bind

Eye Popping

Beyond bumping both games to 720p for their Blu-ray outing, Ready At Dawn also added stereoscopic 3D support—for those interested in playing the games with an extra dimension.

Ready at Dawn had a lot to prove when it set out to make *God of War* games for PSP. Some skeptics didn't believe the series could work on a handheld—not when Kratos had made a name for himself slaying gods in massive, cinematic battles. They didn't think it was possible to recreate the *God of War* experience without a controller and a big TV. They were wrong. The PSP ended up being home to not one but two *GOW* titles that managed to look, feel, and play just like their console brethren.

With the release of the aptly titled *God of War: Origins Collection*, naysayers and fans alike finally have a chance to experience both games with Trophy support and HD visuals. And for as good as the games were with PSP controls and on the small screen, they're even better with a DualShock and a 50-inch HDTV. 2010's *Ghost of Sparta*, in particular, is more visually impressive than any PS2 game and could even go toe-to-toe with some early PS3 titles. While the same can't be said for 2008's *Chains of Olympus*, which doesn't take the HD up-conversion quite as well, it's still a fine-looking game by any standard.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** SCEA
Dev Ready at Dawn
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like the little *God of War* games that could.

Besides, the incredible gameplay more than makes up for these slight graphical inadequacies. This isn't some dumbed-down version of the *GOW* experience—it's the real deal, down to the Gorgon Eyes, Phoenix Feathers, red orbs, and sex minigames. In fact, at times they feel even larger in scale than the first two *GOW* franchise entries, upping the ante with absolutely colossal battles that put most action games to shame.

And fears that the games' stories would suffer due to their positioning on PSP can be put to rest: *Olympus* and *Sparta's* contributions to the franchise lore are just as integral as the console games', delving deep into Kratos' mysterious past and introducing a number of new characters. *Olympus* actually occurs before the first game in the series, following Kratos in the years after his servitude began as a soldier of Ares, and *Sparta*, which takes place after the original *God of War*, plays an even greater role in shaping the series' mythos: Both Kratos' mother, Scylla, and brother, Deimos, are introduced, helping to explain Kratos' motives and, in a way, humanize him.

God of War diehards no longer have any excuse not to play these important additions to the series. Already two of the best PSP games, the improvements to the controls and graphics make them necessary additions to any *GOW* fan's library, whether or not they played the handheld versions. Sure, they're not quite up to the same level as *God of War III*, but make no mistake: *Origins* still kicked our ass all over ancient Greece, and we were smiling the entire time. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

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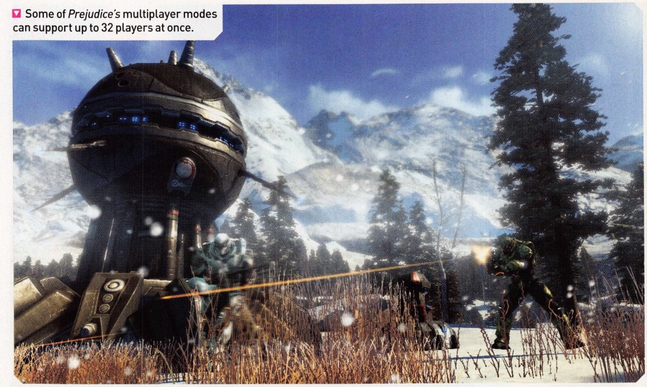
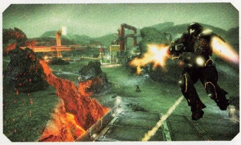


Some of *Prejudice's* multiplayer modes can support up to 32 players at once.



The orbital drop never gets old—especially when we land on our opponents' heads.

Section 8 Prejudice

Pop, lock, and drop in

After launching from an orbital dropship 15,000 feet above the planet's surface, we break our fall by landing on the head of an enemy soldier, killing him instantly. Moments later, we're launching artillery strikes, placing gun turrets in key defensive positions, and using our jetpack to assault an enemy base. After spending several hours with *Section 8: Prejudice*, we totally forgot we were playing a downloadable PSN title. Yet this sci-fi first-person shooter's paltry price is far from its only selling point: *Prejudice* is packed with good ol' fashioned fun.

Unlike its predecessor's single-player mode, which acted solely as a tutorial for multiplayer, *Prejudice's* campaign is driven by narrative and conflict: We fill the boots of Alex Corde, a soldier in the 8th Armored Infantry unit who's investigating a conspiracy involving a sophisticated rebel group known as the Arm of Orion.

Like the original *Section 8*, Corde is equipped with a suit of power armor with rechargeable shields and muscle-enhancing capabilities like Overdrive—a super-fast sprint mode that allows us to quickly span long distances on foot. Our jetpack can be used to out-maneuver enemy fire or reach high vantage points when taking on our foes. A lock-on targeting ability (which can only be used briefly after a lengthy charge-time) is useful for taking down airborne opponents.

As per most first-person shooters, we can customize our weapon loadouts, as well as secondary equipment like grenades, mortars, or repair tools. We can also upgrade our soldier's suit with a limited number of passive bonuses, including enhanced armor, shield capacity, and lock-on duration. These mechanics make for some frantic gameplay and carry over into the multiplayer portion, which is the heart of *Prejudice's* appeal.

Instead of spawning in pre-set ground locations, we begin each match (and re-enter the battlefield after dying) by performing an orbital drop, which creates a dynamically populated battlefield. We must often decide between dropping near defensive objectives or landing near troops that need reinforcing, all the while paying heed to enemy anti-air locations to avoid being shot out of the sky. There's nothing quite like assaulting an enemy base as reinforcements tear through the sky above and slam into the ground nearby.

Among the game's four multiplayer modes, Conquest is king. We must obtain Victory points by capturing and defending bases, killing enemy players, and completing Dynamic Combat missions such as defending a passing convoy or capturing intelligence to use against the enemy. Additional modes are essentially variations of Conquest: Assault is all about quickly capturing enemy control points, Skirmish involves timely completion of DMCs, and Swarm is a typical defend-and-survive horde mode.

As each match progresses, we accrue Requisition points that can be used to purchase structures (think gun turrets) to beef up defenses and vehicles to bolster offensive assaults. The RTS elements are simple to use and add a fun layer of gameplay.

Sure, we could complain of minor lapses in visual and audio quality, but *Prejudice's* high fun-to-price ratio make up for its shortcomings.

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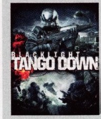
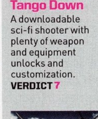
RYAN TALJONICK

Like This? Play these



Blacklight: Tango Down
A downloadable sci-fi shooter with plenty of weapon and equipment unlocks and customization.
VERDICT 7



Battlefield 1943
While not futuristic, this downloadable, squad-based WWII shooter is a ton of multiplayer fun.
VERDICT 8

Info

Format PSN **Pub** TimeGate
Dev TimeGate **Price** $14.99
ESRB Teen **It's like** a FPS mashup of *Vanquish*, *Tribes*, and real-time strategy games.

Dynasty Warriors Gundam 3

Format **PS3** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Omega Force** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Teen**

In spite of the game's adherence to the typical *Dynasty Warriors* formula of felling wave after wave of enemies, we did find some enjoyment in annihilating familiar mechs from the *Gundam* universe. Plus, *Gundam 3*'s cel-shaded visuals provide an aesthetic that's truer to the series' animated origins, and it offers more than 120 upgradeable pilots and mobile suits spanning many of *Gundam's* numerous story arcs. New features—such as the ability to temporarily summon an ally Gundam into battle—add flavor to (but still can't quite redeem) the otherwise bland missions and mindless destruction. Apologies to our Square button for all the mashing. RYAN TALJONICK

PlayStation **6**

Hamilton's Great Adventure

Format **PSN** Pub **FatShark** Dev **FatShark** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Start humming the *Indiana Jones* theme...now! Navigating a grid-like game board with the help of his avian companion Sasha, Ernest Hamilton's adventure has him collecting treasures and hunting down a stolen artifact while platforming over collapsing paths, traps, and other treacherous hurdles. Usually, being caught by these obstacles means starting the level over—something that becomes increasingly frustrating as the levels grow longer and more complicated. Still, the charming visuals and occasionally clever puzzles make it worth checking out, even if the claim that this adventure is "great" might be an exaggeration. HOLLANDER COOPER

PlayStation **6**

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2

Format **PS3** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **EA Bright Light** Price **$49.99** ESRB **Teen**

The final fight has arrived: Harry et al. must destroy the last of the Horcruxes before taking on Voldemort in a showdown at Hogwarts. After the misfortune that was the *Deathly Hallows – Part 1*, our expectations were low, leaving us mildly surprised when our biggest complaint was resolved: Gone are the pointless sidequests that made up the majority of *Part 1*, making this game shorter but less repetitive. But there's no magical solution for *Part 2's* dodgy cover system and temperamental aiming—especially frustrating when utilizing Move controls. Factor in the uncontrollable camera and this third-person shooter is firmly mediocre. ANNE LEWIS

PlayStation **5**

DLC Roundup

Bulletstorm
Blood Symphony

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

Sending foes flying through the air in a spray of meat, blood, and missing limbs is always fun. This DLC pack offers fresh locations for optimal killing sprees and some creative new ways to slaughter opponents. Five new maps push the intense blood-spilling action to new levels of awesomeness.

L.A. Noire
Reefer Madness

Price **$3.99** ESRB **Mature**

Stamping out the great green menace is tough business, but this new case for Detective Cole Phelps gives us ample opportunity to take down the bruisers peddling the sticky-icky right beneath our noses. While not as glorious as solving murders, this caper yields some solid investigative work.

Download of the Month

Fallout: New Vegas Old World Blues

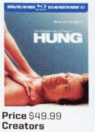
Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

Steeped in an abundance of 1950s-era sci-fi, this humorous jaunt into a warped research crater culminates in a run-in with a gaggle of disembodied scientists—one of whom steals our brain and throws us into the fray with a bunch of mechanical robo-scorpions. This zany expansion is also packed with weird new weaponry, which really makes tracking down our missing gray matter worth the fuss.

Hung Season 2

Finally, man-whoring for the rest of us

Info



Price $49.99
Creators
Colette Burson, Dmitry Lipkin
Starring
Thomas Jane, Jane Adams, Anne Heche
Rated TV-MA
Extras Deleted scenes, commentary on select episodes, behind-the-scenes video.

For viewers of age who wondered—beyond *Deuce Bigalow* and *American Gigolo*—where the man's perspective on the whole whoring issue is, HBO has the answer. Now in its second season, *Hung* proves man-whoring can be a winning topic for both comedy and drama. Thomas Jane's high school gym coach Ray Drecker makes a realistic and compelling protagonist. He's a cash-strapped middle-aged divorcee who finds that he's forced to rely on the one remaining asset he has left—his sizable member.

At night, Ray turns into Richard—"happiness consultant" to bored, lonely, and sometimes wealthy women. Building on the first season's introduction to the business and constant battles between his two competing lady pimps, the second season adds even more depth to the cast of interesting characters.

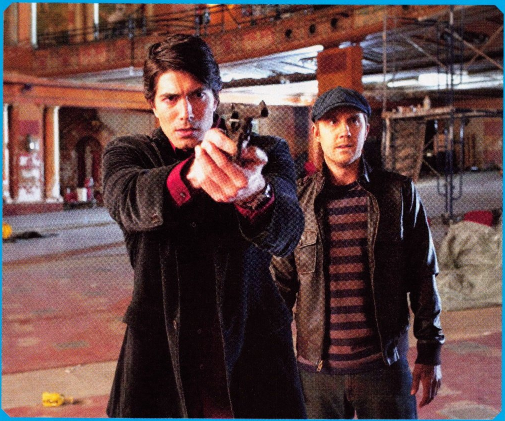
The sophomore season goes to great lengths to broaden the characters of Ray's children and ex-wife, further complicating Ray's life. Granted, Jane Adams, as his first pimp, gets dangerously close to tiresome with her constant neuroses and anxiety. The show also doesn't feel quite as daring as it did the first time around, but there aren't any steps backwards here either.

The biggest achievement of *Hung*, however, is that the half-hour show never devolves into pure sit-com or a raunchy, tasteless mess. The show is absolutely hilarious at times, but largely because it sticks to its sense of unglamorous reality and Thomas Jane's undeniable charisma. He's a mostly normal and frequently clueless guy who is willing to go to incredible lengths to get his life back in order.

Ray is also an all-around good guy, adding a great sense of moral ambiguity to the act of prostitution. Is it still wrong if you're doing it for the right reasons? Who knows, but watching Ray go through hell trying to figure out what women want is thoroughly watchable TV. Of course, this is HBO, so there are no sacred cows left untipped. The show is rife with sex, nudity, profanity, and occasional scenes of violence, but the writing is superb and little here feels unnecessary, gratuitous, or simply done for shock effect.

Hung doesn't come packed with a substantial amount of extras. Only five of the 13 episodes have commentary (worth a listen for fans) and the two-disc collection also comes with a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. **JASON D'APRILE**

PlayStation® The Official Magazine
8



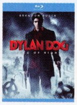
Dylan Dog Dead of Night

Great actors can triumph over anything... Almost.

Based on the highly regarded Italian comic series of the same name and the more recent movie, *The Cemetary Man, Dylan Dog: Dead of Night* tries hard to be a likeable horror comedy with a heavy noir bent. The film mostly succeeds, but just barely. It is generally likeable, and maybe that's part of the problem. Brandon Routh, as Dylan Dog, does his best to look hard and gruff, but his clean-shaven baby face just doesn't bend that way.

The movie has an overreliance on Routh's wooden delivery of extraneous first-person monologue, most of which seems like a desperate attempt to make sure the slower members of the audience can keep up. Thankfully, everything else in the movie is actually interesting. Routh might seem lost in the role of a hard-edged private eye for New Orlean's undead, but the actual undead characters are great.

In particular, Dog's zombified sidekick (Sam Huntington, currently Josh the werewolf on SyFy's *Being Human*) provides a remarkably effective comedic counter to the grimmer portions of the plot.



Info

Price $29.99
Creators Tiziano Sclavi, Kevin Monroe, Thomas Dean Donnelly
Starring Brandon Routh, Sam Huntington, Anita Briem, Kurt Angle, Taye Diggs
Rated PG-13 **Extras** None

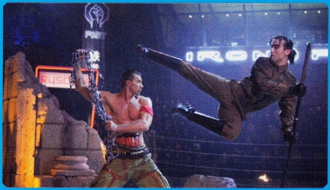
The movie looks great too. For a lower-budget production, the monsters are excellent and New Orleans makes a perfect backdrop for a tale of vampires, werewolves, and zombies just trying to live out fairly normal lives.

The script hinges largely on events after Dylan's old life as a P.I. to the undead. He quit the life after the usual traumatic event made him go too far. But now (cue dramatic music), something big has dragged him back in. Ho hum. It's a shame the movie sticks to such cliché, as a story about an advocate for the undead sounds a lot more interesting than the standard "save the world" plot.

The Blu-ray looks great, but inexcusably has no extras whatsoever. But for fans of the genre, *Dylan Dog* is worth checking out. JD

PlayStation The Official Magazine 6

Blu-ray Roundup



Tekken

Price $39.99 **Rated** R

Given how low the bar is for gaming-based movies, we're happy to report that *Tekken* doesn't suck. It's no cinematic treasure, but the fight scenes are well-choreographed, the plot isn't completely inane, and the acting is surprisingly tolerable. For an R-rated movie, however, the violence is tame and all the characters have sex with their clothes on. 6

Captain America Unreleased Director's Ed.

Price $35.00 **Rated** PG

No, not *that* Captain America. This is a the infamous 1990 Albert Pyun-directed movie, recut with additional footage, that plays out like a cheesy TV pilot. If the picture and sound quality weren't so awful, we'd recommend it to B-movie lovers. 3

Torchwood Complete UK Series

Price $129.98 **Rated** Not Rated

For a show that began as a bland, monster-of-the-week *Doctor Who* tie in, *Torchwood* managed to make a complete turnaround and spawned a joint production that hit the Stars channel this past year. Take the time to relive the original series. 7

Thor

Price $44.99 **Rated** PG-13

Thor led off this past Marvel-studded summer with exciting action sequences and a 3D bang. Director Kenneth Branagh flexes his Shakespearean roots to good effect and has gorgeously realized the epic comic book (and mythological) character. 7

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

monotribe
KORG
VCO
VCA
LFO
OCTAVE
NOISE
RANGE
PEAK
EG
TARGET
MODE
WAVE
TEMPO
RHYTHM
SYNTH
FLUX
GATE TIME

Korg Monotribe

Ever wanted to make old-school videogame music? This portable analog ribbon station offers gloriously analog-sounding loops, multiple synth voices, an eight-step sequencer, and three drum voices.

$250

korg.com

iHome iW1

Apple's AirPlay finally has some friends to play with. Beam music directly to the iW1 wireless speaker system from an iOS device, which can be charged by plugging into the USB port in the back.

$300

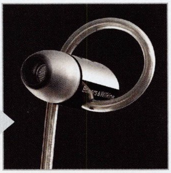
ihomeaudio.com

Bowers & Wilkins C5

To ensure a proper fit while in motion, Secure Loops adjust to hug the inner cartilage of the ear and tungsten weighting near the inner ear ensure a tight seal.

$180

bowers-wilkins.com

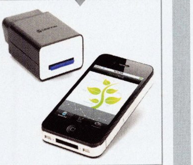

Bowers & Wilkins

Griffin CarTrip

Why should Prius owners have all the eco-fun? Griffin's CarTrip plugs into a car's OBD-II port and allows the monitoring of car acceleration, top speed, fuel consumption, and diagnostic codes through an iOS or Android device.

$90

griffintechnology.com



Google
Apps
3:05

Fossil Digital Meta Watch

Dick Tracy doesn't know what he's missing. This futuristic timepiece pairs via Bluetooth with a phone or tablet, allowing email, instant messages, and other desired data to be sent straight to the wrist.

$200

metawatch.org

12:05 PM TUESDAY MAY 21
PARTLY CLOUDY 59°
HIGH 62 LOW 55
18
7
METAWATCH

Toshiba Thrive

The Thrive isn't the first tablet on the block, but with an SD card slot and full size USB 2.0 and HDMI ports, it may be the most connected: Dumping photos from a camera, connecting directly to a TV, or hooking up an external mouse has never been this easy.

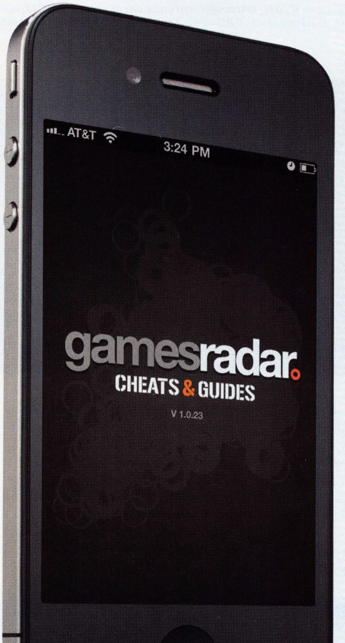
$430 - $580

toshiba.com

“★★★★★”

Amazing app, and it's FREE!

by Vitsnuklz



“★★★★★
THE BEST GUIDES on the internet… ALL IN ONE PLACE”
by Samael76

“★★★★★
Thank you GamesRadar for **FEEDING MY ADDICTION**”
by Poconoscott

“★★★★★
GamesRadar is **FULL OF WIN**”
by Marcello Almaguer

“★★★★★
AWESOMESAUCE! Great app. I love!”
by June Martin

Think guidebooks are too heavy? Is your computer too far away from your console? Do you hate standing up? If so, download our gift to couch potatoes!

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www.futureus.com

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

mail@ptom

In defense of New Jersey, Kratos makes a guest appearance, and the price of awesome

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

PS3 | PSP | PlayStation.2
PlayStation
Official Magazine
Issue 048 August 2011
TOUCH & GO
Hands-on with the PS Vita launch lineup
THE HEAVY HITTERS
Modern Warfare 3
Hitman: Absolution
BioShock Infinite
Batman: Arkham City
Final Fantasy XIII-2
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
NINJA GAIDEN 3
PS3's deadliest assassin unmasked
WE KISS AND TELL
Catherine's secrets
JOURNEY X-MEN DESTINY INFAMOUS 2 STARHAWK

Here at PTOM, we'd like to think that ninjas are our spirit animal.

Voy Wonders

In your PS Vita feature [Issue #48] for *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, you write: "Not a port, nor a prequel, *Golden Abyss* is a standalone adventure that takes place before *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*." Sounds like a prequel to me.
VOY THE INTERNET

We don't consider Golden Abyss *to be a prequel because the story isn't directly related to the rest of the series. Sure it involves some of the same characters and takes place before the other games, but in our mind, that doesn't necessarily qualify the game as a true prequel. We can see how that was a bit unclear, but to be fair, we only had so many words to work with... Okay, okay! It's a prequel. Happy? Now, never question us again!*

100% PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE
PSM
GRAND THEFT AUTO?
TESTED!
JAMES BOND 007 NIGHTFIRE
PLUS

The PSM/PTOM Project

I have every PSM/PTOM issue, including two copies of PSM #1. I love this magazine so much that I couldn't give, much less throw them, away. I want to thank all of the current and past staff for years of entertainment. Oh, but I'm actually missing a few issues. If anybody out there wants to help me out with my collection, I need issues April '98 #8, October '99 #26 cover 1 of 2, April '00 #32, March '01 #43, and July '02 #60 cover 1 of 2. Thanks! **MIGUEL** THE INTERNET

We're honored by your commitment to our magazine, Miguel. Unfortunately, we don't have extra copies of all the issues you mentioned...but maybe other readers do. If you're willing to help Miguel, contact us. Together we can Platinum his PlayStation magazine archive!

Forever Alone

Recently I was at a franchise coffee establishment alternating between studying for the GRE and reading PTOM when a very attractive and clearly successful woman dressed in business formal sat down at a table next to me. When she saw your magazine, she actually sneered and looked away in disgust. Comments?
FM CASE THE INTERNET

We tend to have that effect on women.

Warranty Woes

I'm writing to you today because something happened: my controller won't turn on my PS3. Either of my controllers, actually. Problem is, when I called Sony to see what I could do (or what they could do) they said they couldn't fix it because the one-year warranty was up. What I don't get is, why does Sony have a one-year warranty on a console that's supposed

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

to last 10 years? Why not offer a five-year warranty at least?

JOSE GONZALEZ CLEVELAND, OH

Well, product warranties are generally intended to cover manufacturing defects, not problems that might arise from product use over time. That being said, however, a PlayStation insurance policy would be a handy option for a lot of people. Perhaps Sony should look into it...

Woo! Jersey!

I'm taking exception to the odiferous comment about New Jersey in last issue's Mail column. If you travel south of Trenton, you'd see why NJ is called "The Garden State." NJ is more than the industrial mudflats of the Meadowlands that you see when landing at the Newark airport. Show Jersey some love.

JOE CONNOR PENNSVILLE, NJ

You know, you're absolutely right. It can be tough to overlook things like Zach Braff movies, Jersey Shore, the Nets, and opportunities to use the word "odiferous" accurately, but Jersey certainly has a lot to offer...most notably Bruce Springsteen. Plus, anything's better than Arizona, right?

Codependent

I think a majority of gamers are in their 20s or 30s, which means working class, nine-to-five adults. Why, then, are we forced to play exceptional games in co-op mode? Being a working adult gamer and a father, I can't always schedule time to play with someone else. Even when I try to play with friends online, they have to own a copy of the game I'm playing and be online at the exact right time, so I'm either left with an incompetent A.I. partner that I must babysit or the difficulty gets ramped up extremely high, ruining the experience. All I'm saying is, if a game can be played both solo and co-op, don't penalize a major part of the gaming market for not having the time or ability to play co-op. Or simply make it co-op *only* and I won't buy it.

MARVIN D THE INTERNET

What you need, Marvin, are some interns. You can make them play games with you whenever you want—even in the middle of the night. They're great! In the meantime, yes, more games with split campaigns like Portal 2*. We can get behind that.*

Forever Alone, Part 2

So here's the deal: PlayStation mag is the only mag that I can bring into the bathroom with me to "read." Is there any way you can include a couple of decent photos of girls to look at every month? I liked the MMA girls—more of that would be amazing. Thanks for reading my letter; hope to see the ladies in next month's mag.

ADROCK THE INTERNET

*Oh...oooh, all right, we get what you're saying, Adrock. Need a little "you" time, huh? *wink, nudge* Well here's a special photo of Qore host/geek goddess Veronica Belmont just for you!*

Flunk Dial

So I walk into Best Buy to get my new Xperia Play (aka the PlayStation Phone). Tell the lady I want this phone. With the biggest smile on her face, she tells me, "$90 a month." What?? I mean, do we all have a $1,000 per week salary jobs like you guys? I don't know what kind of world you all live in, but $90 a month could actually be the newest PS3 game *and* the newest PSP game. Or it could be what a family with Cricket pays for up to three phones, or it could be what those guys pay you to publish their letter as Letter of the Month. Hell, I know even some of you guys at PTOM wouldn't pay $90 for this phone. So what would you do with $90 per month?

RAFAEL THE INTERNET

*What would we do with $90 a month? What do we care, we're thousandaires, remember? Not to mention all that Letter of the Month bribe money... Speaking of which, your letter would have been selected Letter of the Month had you enclosed some *ahem* proper appreciation for us.*

Ask Kratos

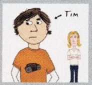
Q **Didn't Sony say that *God of War III* would be the last *GOW* game? Now there's the PSP collection coming out, and I heard that Sony's working on another *GOW* game for PS3. Don't they have anything better to make?**

TAVIS
THE INTERNET

A AM I NOT ENTITLED THE SPOILS OF MY TRIUMPH, FOOL? SHOULD MY TALE WHITHER AND DIE ONLY NOW THAT I HAVE SATED MY BURNING HATRED WITH THE SWEET NECTAR OF VICTORY? I HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO AUTHOR MY STORY AND NO MORTAL MAN MAY STOP ME!

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM



The Life & Times of Tim

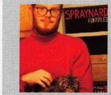
"Roger's not the only one who can gush about HBO GO. Thanks to the online streaming service, I discovered *The Life & Times of Tim*, an astoundingly funny animated gem."

GARY STEINMAN

SF Giants Pillow Pet

"I may have to turn in my Man card for this, but I love Pillow Pets. They're like a bosomy embrace for my head while I sleep. Now that I've procured the irresistible San Francisco Giant's Panda edition, I don't have to steal my kids' Pillow Pets anymore."

ROGER BURCHILL



Funtitled

"Sure, Spraynard borrows heavily from bands like Latterman, but they do it so well that I could honestly care less. Their recent full-length *Funtitled* is pure triumphant pop punk glory."

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

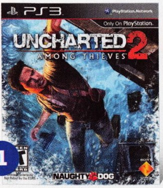
XXL Grilled Stuft Burrito

"Don't tell me where the 'steak' actually comes from, I don't want to know and I don't care to know—but I do care that this delicious addition to the Taco Bell menu satisfies my desire for fake Mexican food. In fact, I think I'll go get one right now."

RYAN TALJONICK

PS3 Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games



1

Action Adventure

Uncharted 2
Among Thieves

There's no way around it, Nathan Drake is the PS3's biggest star and *Uncharted 2* is his most impressive adventure yet, with breathtaking action and an incredible story. No excuses: Get it and play it!

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

GOD OF WAR III

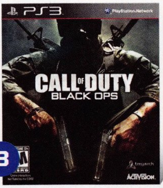
2

Action Adventure

God of War III

Huge beautiful battlegrounds and brutally gory fights with magnificent climaxes: we expected the world from the finale of Kratos' trilogy and we got it. A must-have for anyone with even the slightest amount of bloodlust.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Santa Monica Studio**



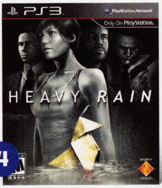
3

First-Person Shooter

Call of Duty
Black Ops

Black Ops improves on *Modern Warfare's* already awesome FPS formula. The franchise is in top form with a brand new single-player story, the beloved zombie mode, and its top-notch online multiplayer.

10 Pub **Activision**
Dev **Treyarch**



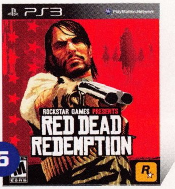
4

Adventure

Heavy Rain

Innovative, intriguing, and immersive, *Heavy Rain* is one of the most original titles in years. The mystery of the Origami Killer will keep you guessing until it's solved... or until the heroes die in the process.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Quantic Dream**



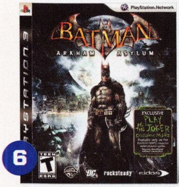
5

Open-World Shooter

Red Dead Redemption

Continuing with its record of amazing titles, Rockstar's latest open-world game combines a drop-dead gorgeous Old West with a mesmerizing story and fabulous characters.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar SD/North**



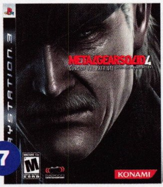
6

Action Adventure

Batman
Arkham Asylum

Finally, the Caped Crusader gets the current-gen game he deserves. Use a plethora of bat-gadgets and bat-moves to take back the Joker-controlled Arkham Asylum and love every second of it.

10 Pub **Eidos/Warner Bros.**
Dev **Rocksteady**



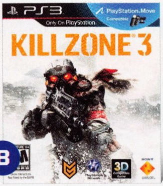
7

Stealth Action

Metal Gear Solid 4

Hideo Kojima's masterpiece might be criticized for its lengthy cutscenes and convoluted storyline, but that shouldn't stop anyone from experiencing one of the most important games on any platform today.

10 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**



8

First-Person Shooter

Killzone 3

War isn't pretty—unless you're playing *Killzone 3*. But the latest clash between the ISA and Helghast ventures beyond great graphics with improvements to combat, storyline, and multiplayer that propel it to the FPS genre's top ranks.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Guerrilla Games**

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

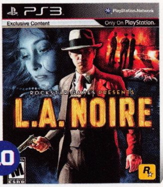
9

Fighter

Super Street Fighter IV

An update to the best fighting game from the most well-respected series in gaming history makes for a can't-miss title. Kicking heads and nostalgia combine to form one perfect package.

10 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**



10

Adventure

L.A. Noire

Rockstar blazes new gameplay trails again with its MotionScan technology that captures and animates facial expressions. Players must "read" people while investigating crimes in a vividly recreated 1940s Los Angeles.

9 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Team Bondi**

Team Choice

inFamous 2

"While we loved barbequing bad guys in the original *inFamous*, the sequel improves upon its predecessor in every conceivable way: Varied side missions, exciting new powers, and a new personality-infused Cole make this a worthwhile romp."

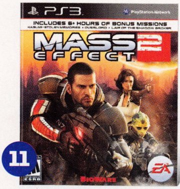
Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor

Power
Custom silicon harnesses crisp HD, ear-splitting audio, multi-processor might, and Blu-ray to deliver pure gaming perfection.

Online
Surf the net, message friends, and download movies, music and expansion packs, plus demos and games from the PlayStation Store.

Connectivity
USB slots to plug in DualShock pads and many other devices.

Want More?
Get inside access to hot games, sizzling betas, and other goodies by subscribing to Qore. Well? What are you waiting for?
Get it now on PSN
qore



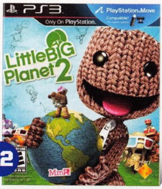
11

Role-Playing Shooter

Mass Effect 2

Mass Effect 2 features a spectacular story wrought with intense action and game-changing decisions, and the PS3 version of BioWare's third-person shooter/RPG is the franchise's best. Bring on *Mass Effect 3*!

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**



12

Platformer

LittleBigPlanet 2

Oh Sackboy, how we love thee. The biggest little game on PS3 is rocking our worlds with its sequel. The standard in-game fare is excellent, but it's the ingenious levels crafted by the the fan community that truly amaze and delight.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

FINAL FANTASY XIII

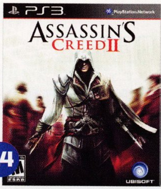
13

Role-Playing

Final Fantasy XIII

It takes a bit of a commitment and the gameplay is more linear in this outing, but the gorgeous visuals, crazy deep combat, and oh yes, the lovely heroine Lightning, make this RPG more than worth getting into, and through.

10 Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**



14

Stealth Adventure

Assassin's Creed II

While the first *Assassin's Creed* may not quite have lived up to its full potential, Ubisoft built off what they learned to create the best parkour-influenced stealth game of all time. It doesn't hurt that it's awfully pretty in action either.

10 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

15

First-Person Puzzler

Portal 2

Valve's insidiously creative puzzle adventure twists our perception of reality and tosses it through gateways we shoot into its walls. If your brain starts hurting, invite a friend—co-op adds a "hole" other dimension to gameplay.

9 Pub **Valve / EA**
Dev **Valve**

NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT

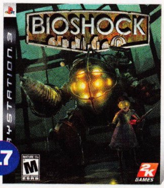
16

Driving

Need For Speed Hot Pursuit

The high-speed pursuits from the good old days are back and they look better than ever. Race the cops or join them, but the cars are hot either way so don't let that sway which side of the law to select.

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Criterion Games**



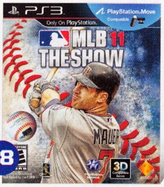
17

First-Person Shooter

BioShock

One of the most beautifully designed shooters of all time with an amazing story to boot. Due to the freshness and originality of the first romp through Rapture, we recommend the original over the still magnificent sequel.

10 Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Irrational Games**



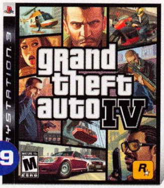
18

Sports

MLB 11 The Show

Consider the sport of baseball a PlayStation exclusive as there's no better videogame representation of the American pastime. The Move-supported Home Run Derby adds arcade fun on top of the simulation perfection.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE San Diego**



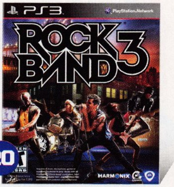
19

Open-World Action

Grand Theft Auto IV

There's a reason why *GTA* sells like crazy. This open-world gangster game is one of the most incredible achievements that the videogame medium has to offer. Great story, great characters, great adventure. Just plain great.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**



20

Music

Rock Band 3

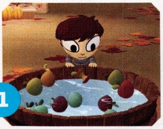
Didn't think we could pass up the best party game going right now, did you? With a massive songlist and the brilliant new Pro mode, *Rock Band 3* easily overtakes its rival *Guitar Hero* for the top music game on PS3.

9 Pub **EA/MTV Games**
Dev **Harmonix**

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

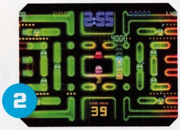

1

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9
Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

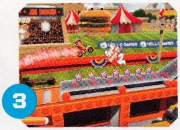

2

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9
Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**

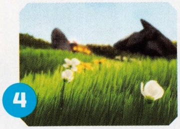

3

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9
Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

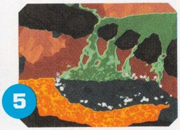

4

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**


5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair taxing both the mind and reflexes.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

6

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

7

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

8

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era–esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8
Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

9

Beat-'em-up Platformer

Outland

Outland offers a new twist on action platformers with its polarity-swapping mechanic: Switch between light and dark personas to deflect like-colored bullets and interact with like-colored platforms. Distinctive visuals enhance the beat-'em-up combat and projectile avoidance gameplay.

8
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Housemarque**

10

Tower of Power

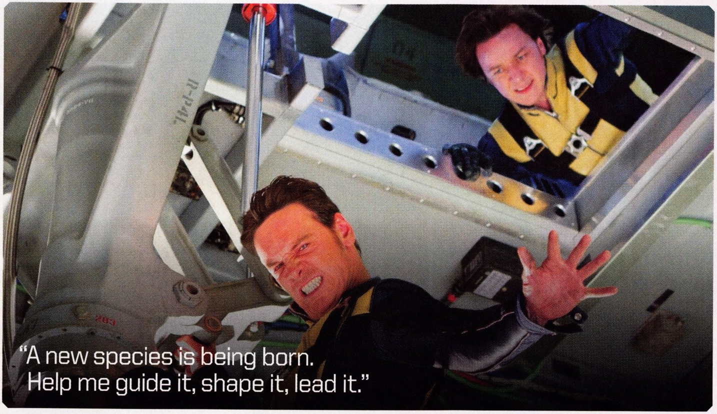
PixelJunk Monsters

What's one to do when monsters attack? How about earning funds and building offensive towers featuring varying attributes like speed, range, and power? Or, we could invite them in for diplomatic discussions and tea, but what fun is that?

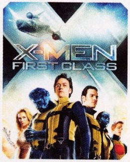
8
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"A new species is being born. Help me guide it, shape it, lead it."



X-Men: First Class

ETA **Sept 9** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Sci-Fi /Action** Studio **20th Century Fox/Marvel Entertainment**

The latest *X-Men* movie marks a resurgence for the film franchise with a prequel storyline that chronicles the superhero organization's origin and formation. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis serves as the backdrop for *First Class'* action, but it's the early camaraderie and subsequent alienation between Charles Xavier (Professor X) and Erik Lensherr (Magneto) that's the movie's heart. Ah yes…a bromantic journey from friendship to archenemies; it reminds us of our relationship with cream pies. So tasty, but in the end, so evil.

Top VDS Downloads

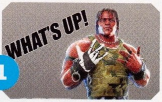
Movies

Insidious
Limitless
Arthur (2011)
The Lincoln Lawyer
Source Code

TV Shows

Mortal Kombat: Legacy
Breaking Bad: Season 4
Dexter: Season 5
White Collar: Season 3
Teen Wolf: Season 1

BEST FREE STUFF



1

Bust a move

WWE All-Stars
R-Truth DLC

Music and testosterone go hand-in-hand, so it's no wonder that rapper-turned-wrestler R-Truth combined his passion for busting rhymes with busting heads. Get some Truth with this free character download.

Pub **THQ**
Dev **THQ San Diego**

2

Killer Kharacters

Mortal Kombat
Comp. Packs 2 & 3

Feel like beefing up *Mortal Kombat's* fighting roster? This two-three punch of character updates unlocks the saucy Kitana and Jade Klassik *MK2* skins alongside Smoke and Noob Saibot Klassic.

Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive**
Dev **NetherRealm Studios**

3

Destruction derby

MotorStorm: Apocalypse
King of Diamonds

Rev the engines with this event pack's six new single-player races that offer up more chaos. There's also a free Queen of Hearts pack too.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Evolution Studios**

4

Girlfriend experience

Catherine
Wallpaper

Saucy, sassy, and crazy as all-get-out, the titular Catherine is a romantic force to reckon with. Why not gaze deeply into her, um, big blue eyes all day with this free wallpaper? Look, but don't touch!

Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Gearbox Software**

5

Queen of the road

Cars 2
The Queen

Who says we can't burn rubber with a touch of class? Download ol' Queenie here and show the competition who's the boss while making amply regal quips. They'll eat their words, and some serious dust.

Pub **Disney Interactive**
Dev **Avalanche Software**

Shooter Clichés

PlayStation's most recycled shooter innovations(?)

Exploding Barrels

***Doom* | Discovered 1993**

The original FPS gimmick and, some say, the best. Sadly it's hard to hear those people, because they're exactly the kind of idiots that squat behind bright red barrels of highly flammable liquid during firefights, thinking it perfect cover, heedless to the charred blackened remains surrounding them.

Repackaged by: Almost every game ever made.

UNCHARTED 2
AMONG THIEVES
DOOM
CALL OF DUTY
BLACK OPS
CRYSIS 2
GRAVITY GUNS x24
FLYING HELMETS x50

Gravity Guns

***Half-Life 2* | Discovered 2004**

Half-Life 2 made physics a shooter requirement, not just due to great tech but clever use of buoyancy, gravity, and inertia in its puzzles. Rival devs ignored all that and seized the obvious part: the gun. Or what we call Force powers or energy leashes or grappling hooks... OR WHATEVER.

Repackaged by: *Force Unleashed*, *Just Cause*, *Prototype*, *inFamous*, *Bulletstorm*

Bullet Time

***Max Payne* | Discovered 2001**

Bullets go fast. What better way to dodge them than to see time from their point of view? Started by the famously clumsy Max Payne—who can only shoot while plunging onto his butt—the fad spread to bullet-tracking sniper shots to button-jabbing quick-time events. Will shooters ever tire of slo-mo? "NoooOOOooo..." said Slo-Mo Man, yesterday.

Repackaged by: *FEAR*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Tomb Raider*

Zombies

***Resident Evil* | Discovered 1996**

Not to be too cynical (what would be the point?), but zombies are the greatest gift for lazy developers since deathmatch. They're a stupid, weaponless enemy with awkward movement, zero dialogue, and an inherent inability to fight as a group. It's no wonder they're popular—even Nazis look stupid dying by the thousands in one doorway, but zombies just look funny.

Repackaged by: *Call of Duty*, *Dead Rising*, *Dead Island*, *Red Dead Redemption*

Flying Hats

***Medal of Honor* | Discovered 1999**

What's more satisfying than a headshot? It's shooting a man in the head and watching his hat pop like a champagne cork. From *Medal of Honor's* past to *Killzone's* future, helmets are jumping like bubbles in Coke. If only the Helghast had invented sturdy chin straps instead of walking battleships with glowing weak spots, things might've been different!

Repackaged by: *Killzone*, *Call of Duty*, *Brothers in Arms*

PS3

PlayStation Network

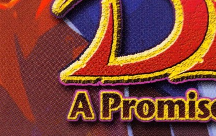
This Summer...

The Netherworld Special Election Begins!

DISGAEA® 4

A Promise Unforgotten

Mega Evolved Graphics!



Superb Networking System!

12dm
LAVINIA
NEKO Pirate

Gigantic Weapons!?

26dm
MENU
Characters

Massive Monsters Appear!?

204
TOTAL DAMAGE

*Screenshots are not from the final product.

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PREMIUM EDITION

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Blood
Drug Reference
Fantasy Violence
Language
Suggestive Themes

日本一 SOFTWARE

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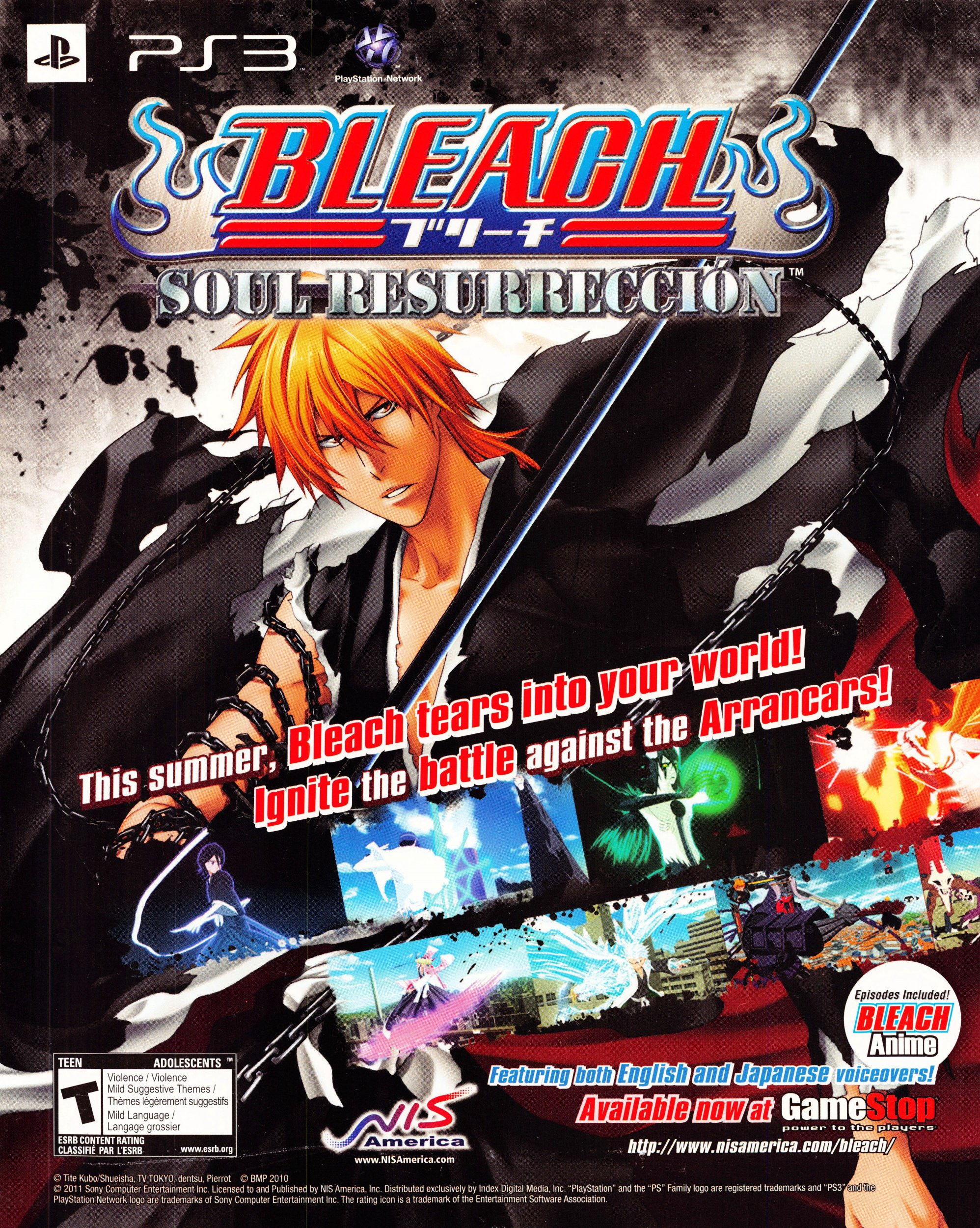

PS3

PlayStation Network

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TEEN ADOLESCENTS™

T

Violence / Violence

Mild Suggestive Themes / Thèmes légèrement suggestifs

Mild Language / Langage grossier

ESRB CONTENT RATING CLASSIFIÉ PAR L'ESRB www.esrb.org

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